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**ASTOR, LENOX AND
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*From a Portrait taken at the
age of 11*

LETTERS

OF

Abigail Smith
MRS. ADAMS,

THE WIFE OF JOHN ADAMS.

WITH AN

INTRODUCTORY MEMOIR

BY HER GRANDSON,

CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS.

VOLUME I.

SECOND EDITION.

BOSTON:

CHARLES C. LITTLE AND JAMES BROWN,

M DCCC XL.

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PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE extremely favorable reception which the Letters of Mrs. Adams have thus far met with from the American public, encourages the Editor to attempt the present republication of them. The opportunity has been taken to revise the text by a fresh comparison with the original manuscripts, and carefully to correct that portion of the work which was supplied by himself. Objections to the somewhat unwieldy size of the former volume have been removed by dividing the matter which it contained into two. In order to do this, however, it was found necessary to add a few letters. These, together with a commentary upon them in the memoir, originally prepared for the first

edition, and finally excluded from it only because of the unexpectedly large space which the letters of earlier date were found to occupy, are now inserted. In all other respects the two editions do not differ.

Boston, December, 1840.

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MEMOIR.

THE memorials of that generation, by whose efforts the independence of the United States was achieved, are in great abundance. There is hardly an event of importance, from the year 1765 to the date of the definitive treaty of peace with Great Britain, in September, 1783, which has not been recorded, either by the industry of actors upon the scene, or by the indefatigable activity of a succeeding class of students. These persons have devoted themselves, with a highly commendable zeal, to the investigation of all particulars, even the most minute, that relate to this interesting period. The individuals, called to act most conspicuously in the Revolution, have many of them left voluminous collections of papers, which, as time passes, find their way to the light by publication, and furnish important illustrations of the feelings and motives under which the contest was carried on. The actors are thus made to stand in bold

relief before us. We not only see the public record, but the private commentary also ; and these, taken in connexion with the contemporaneous histories, all of which, however defective in philosophical analysis, are invaluable depositories of facts related by living witnesses, will serve to transmit to posterity the details for a narration in as complete a form as will in all probability ever be attained by the imperfect faculties of man.

Admitting these observations to be true, there is, nevertheless, a distinction to be drawn between the materials for a history of action and those for one of feeling ; between the conduct of men aiming at distinction among their fellow-beings, and the private, familiar sentiments, that run into the texture of the social system, without remark or the hope of observation. Here it is, that something like a void in our annals appears still to exist. Our history is for the most part wrapped up in the forms of office. The great men of the Revolution, in the eyes of posterity, are, many of them, like heroes of a mythological age. They are seen, for the most part, when conscious that they are acting upon a theatre, where individual sentiment must be sometimes disguised, and often sacrificed, for the public good. Statesmen and generals rarely say all they think or feel. The consequence is,

that, in the papers which come from them, they are made to assume a uniform of grave hue, which, though it doubtless exalts the opinion entertained of their perfections, somewhat diminishes the interest with which later generations study their character. Students of human nature seek for examples of man under circumstances of difficulty and trial; man as he is, not as he would appear; but there are many reasons why they are often baffled in the search. We look for the workings of the heart, when those of the head alone are presented to us. We watch the emotions of the spirit, and yet find clear traces only of the reasoning of the intellect. The solitary meditation, the confidential whisper to a friend, never meant to reach the ear of the multitude, the secret wishes, not to be blazoned forth to catch applause, the fluctuations between fear and hope, that most betray the springs of action,—these are the guides to character, which most frequently vanish with the moment that called them forth, and leave nothing to posterity but the coarser elements for judgment, that may be found in elaborated results.

There is, moreover, another distinction to be observed, which is not infrequently lost sight of. It is of great importance not only to understand the nature of the superiority of

the individuals, who have made themselves a name above their fellow-beings, but to estimate the degree in which the excellence for which they were distinguished was shared by those among whom they lived. Inattention to this duty might present Patrick Henry and James Otis, Washington, Jefferson, and Samuel Adams, as the causes of the American Revolution, which they were not. There was a moral principle in the field, to the power of which a great majority of the whole population of the colonies, whether male or female, old or young, had been long and habitually trained to do homage. The individuals named, with the rest of their celebrated associates, who best represented that moral principle before the world, were not the originators, but the spokesmen of the general opinion, and instruments for its adaptation to existing events. Whether fighting in the field, or deliberating in the Senate, their strength against Great Britain was not that of numbers, nor of wealth, nor of genius; but it drew its nourishment from the sentiment that pervaded the dwellings of the entire population.

How much this home sentiment did then, and does ever, depend upon the character of the female portion of the people, will be too readily understood by all, to require explanation. The

domestic hearth is the first of schools, and the best of lecture-rooms; for there the heart will coöperate with the mind, the affections with the reasoning power. And this is the scene for the almost exclusive sway of the weaker sex. Yet, great as the influence thus exercised undoubtedly is, it escapes observation in such a manner, that history rarely takes much account of it. The maxims of religion, faith, hope, and charity, are not passed through the alembic of logical proof, before they are admitted into the daily practice of women. They go at once into the teachings of infancy, and thus form the only high and pure motives of which matured manhood can, in its subsequent action, ever boast. Neither, when the stamp of duty is to be struck in the young mind, is there commonly so much of alloy in the female heart as with men, with which the genuine metal may be fused, and the face of the coin made dim. There is not so much room for the doctrines of expediency, and the promptings of private interest, to compromise the force of public example. In every instance of domestic convulsions, and when the pruning-hook is deserted for the sword and musket, the sacrifice of feelings made by the female sex is unmixed with a hope of worldly compensation. With them there is no ambition to gratify, no fame to be

gained by the simply negative virtue of privations suffered in silence. There is no action to drown in its noise and bustle—a full sense of the pain that must inevitably attend it. The lot of woman, in times of trouble, is to be a passive spectator of events, which she can scarcely hope to make subservient to her own fame, or to control.

If it were possible to get at the expression of feelings by women in the heart of a community, at a moment of extraordinary trial, recorded in a shape evidently designed to be secret and confidential, this would seem to present the surest and most unfailing index to its general character. Hitherto we have not gathered much of this material in the United States. The dispersion of families, so common in America, the consequent destruction of private papers, the defective nature of female education before the Revolution, the difficulty and danger of free communication, and the engrossing character, to the men, of public, and to the women, of domestic cares, have all contributed to cut short, if not completely to destroy, the sources of information. It is truly remarked, in the present volume, that “instances of patience, perseverance, fortitude, magnanimity, courage, humanity, and tenderness, which would have graced the Roman character, were known only to those

who were themselves the actors, and whose modesty could not suffer them to blazon abroad their own fame."¹ The heroism of the females of the Revolution has gone from memory with the generation that witnessed it, and nothing, absolutely nothing, remains upon the ear of the young of the present day, but the faint echo of an expiring general tradition. Neither is there much remembrance of the domestic manners of the last century, when, with more of admitted distinctions than at present, there was more of general equality; nor of the state of social feeling, or of that simplicity of intercourse, which, in colonial times, constituted in New England as near an approach to the successful exemplification of the democratic theory, as the irregularity in the natural gifts of men will, in all probability, ever practically allow.

It is the purpose of the present volume to contribute something to the supply of this deficiency, by giving to tradition a form partially palpable. The present is believed to be the first attempt, in the United States, to lay before the public a series of private letters, written without the remotest idea of publication, by a woman, to her husband, and others of her nearest and dearest relations. Their greatest value

¹ Letter, 4 March, 1786.

consists in the fact, susceptible of no misconception, that they furnish an exact transcript of the feelings of the writer, in times of no ordinary trial. Independently of this, the variety of scenes in which she wrote, and the opportunities furnished for observation in the situations in which she was placed by the elevation of her husband to high official positions in the country, may contribute to sustain the interest with which they will be read. The undertaking is, nevertheless, too novel not to inspire the Editor with some doubt of its success, particularly as it brings forward to public notice a person who has now been long removed from the scene of action, and of whom, it is not unreasonable to suppose, the present generation of readers have neither personal knowledge nor recollection. For the sake of facilitating their progress, and explaining the allusions to persons and objects very frequently occurring, it may not be deemed improper here to premise some account of her life.

There were few persons of her day and generation, who derived their origin, or imbibed their character, more exclusively from the genuine stock of the Massachusetts Puritan settlers, than Abigail Smith. Her father, the Reverend William Smith, was the settled minister of the Congregational Church at Weymouth, for more

than forty years, and until his death. Her mother, Elizabeth Quincy, was the granddaughter of the Reverend John Norton, long the pastor of a church of the same denomination in the neighbouring town of Hingham, and the nephew of John Norton, well known in the annals of the colony.¹ Her maternal grandfather, John Quincy, was the grandson of Thomas Shepard, minister of Charlestown, distinguished in his day, and the son of the more distinguished Thomas Shepard of Cambridge, whose name still lives in one of the churches of that town. These are persons whose merits may be found fully recorded in the pages of Mather and of Neal. They were among the most noted of the most reputed class of their day. In a colony, founded so exclusively upon motives of religious zeal as Massachusetts was, it necessarily followed, that the ordinary distinctions of society were in a great degree subverted, and that the leaders of the church, though without worldly possessions to boast of, were the most in honor everywhere. Education was promoted only as it was subsidiary to the great end of studying or expounding the Scriptures; and whatever of advance was made in the intellectual pursuits of society, was rather

¹ Hutchinson, Vol. I. pp. 220, *et seq.*

the incidental than the direct result of studies necessary to fit men for a holy calling. Hence it was, that the higher departments of knowledge were entered almost exclusively by the clergy. Classical learning was a natural, though indirect consequence of the acquisition of those languages, in which the New Testament and the Fathers were to be studied; and dialectics formed the armour, of which men were compelled to learn the use, as a preparation for the wars of religious controversy. The mastery of these gave power and authority to their possessors, who, by a very natural transition, passed from being the guides of religious faith to their fellow men, to be guardians of their education. To them, as the fountains of knowledge, and possessing the gifts most prized in the community, all other ranks in society cheerfully gave place. If a festive entertainment was meditated, the minister was sure to be first on the list of those to be invited. If any assembly of citizens was held, he must be there to open the business with prayer. If a political measure was in agitation, he was among the first whose opinion was to be consulted. Even the civil rights of the other citizens for a long time depended, in some degree, upon his good word; and, after this rigid rule was laid aside, he yet continued, in the absence of technical law and

lawyers, to be the arbiter and the judge in the differences between his fellow men. He was not infrequently the family physician. The great object of instruction being religious, the care of the young was also in his hands. The records of Harvard University, the child and darling of Puritan affections, show that of all the presiding officers, during the century and a half of colonial days, but two were laymen, and not ministers of the prevailing denomination; and that of all, who in the early times, availed themselves of such advantages as this institution could then offer, nearly half the number did so for the sake of devoting themselves to the service of the gospel.

But the prevailing notion of the purpose of education was attended with one remarkable consequence. The cultivation of the female mind was regarded with utter indifference. It is not impossible, that the early example of Mrs. Hutchinson, and the difficulties in which the public exercise of her gifts involved the colony, had established in the public mind a conviction of the danger that may attend the meddling of women with abstruse points of doctrine; and these, however they might confound the strongest intellect, were, nevertheless, the favorite topics of thought and discussion in that generation. Waving a decision upon this, it may very

safely be assumed, not only that there was very little attention given to the education of women, but that, as Mrs. Adams, in one of her letters,¹ says, "It was fashionable to ridicule female learning." The only chance for much intellectual improvement in the female sex was, therefore, to be found in the families of that, which was the educated class, and in occasional intercourse with the learned of their day. Whatever of useful instruction was received in the practical conduct of life, came from maternal lips; and what of further mental developement, depended more upon the eagerness with which the casual teachings of daily conversation were treasured up, than upon any labor expended purposely to promote it.

Abigail Smith was the second of three daughters. Her father, as has been already mentioned, was the minister of a small Congregational Church in the town of Weymouth, during the middle of the last century. She was born in that town, on the 11th of November, 1744, O. S. In her neighbourhood, there were not many advantages of instruction to be found; and even in Boston, the small metropolis nearest at hand, for reasons already stated, the list of accomplishments within the reach of females was, probably, very short. She did not enjoy an

¹ Vol. I. page 128.

opportunity to acquire even such as there might have been, for the delicate state of her health forbade the idea of sending her away from home to obtain them. In a letter, written in 1817, the year before her death, speaking of her own deficiencies, she says; "My early education did not partake of the abundant opportunities which the present days offer, and which even our common country schools now afford. *I never was sent to any school.* I was always sick. Female education, in the best families, went no further than writing and arithmetic; in some few and rare instances, music and dancing." Hence it is not unreasonable to suppose that the knowledge gained by her was rather the result of the society into which she was thrown, than of any elaborate instruction.

This fact, that the author of the letters in the present volume never went to any school, is a very important one to a proper estimate of her character. For, whatever may be the decision of the long-vexed question between the advantages of public and those of private education, few persons will deny, that they produce marked differences in the formation of character. Seclusion from companions of the same age, at any time of life, is calculated to develope the imaginative faculty, at the expense of the judgment; but especially in youth, when the most

durable impressions are making. The ordinary consequence, in females of a meditative turn of mind, is the indulgence of romantic and exaggerated sentiments drawn from books, which, if subjected to the ordinary routine of large schools, are worn down by the attrition of social intercourse. These ideas, formed in solitude, in early life, often, though not always, remain in the mind, even after the realities of the world surround those who hold them, and counteract the tendency of their conclusions. They are constantly visible, in the letters of these volumes, even in the midst of the severest trials. They form what may be considered the romantic turn of the author's mind; but, in her case, they were so far modified by a great admixture of religious principle and by natural good sense, as to be of eminent service in sustaining her through the painful situations in which she was placed, instead of nursing that species of sickly sensibility, which too frequently, in similar circumstances, impairs, if it does not destroy, the power of practical usefulness.

At Mount Wollaston, a part of Braintree, the town next adjoining Weymouth, lived Colonel John Quincy, her grandfather on the mother's side, and a gentleman, who, for very many years, enjoyed, in various official situations, much of the confidence of the Colony. At his

house, and under the instruction of his wife, her grandmother, she appears to have imbibed most of the lessons which made the deepest impression upon her mind. Of this lady, the daughter of the Reverend John Norton, nothing is now known, but what the frequent and cheerful acknowledgment of her merit, by her disciple, tells us. "I have not forgotten," says the latter to her own daughter, in the year 1795, "the excellent lessons which I received from my grandmother, at a very early period of life. I frequently think they made a more durable impression upon my mind, than those which I received from my own parents. Whether it was owing to the happy method of mixing instruction and amusement together, or from an inflexible adherence to certain principles, the utility of which I could not but see and approve when a child, I know not; but maturer years have rendered them oracles of wisdom to me. I love and revere her memory; her lively, cheerful disposition animated all around her, whilst she edified all by her unaffected piety. This tribute is due to the memory of those virtues, the sweet remembrance of which will flourish, though she has long slept with her ancestors." Again, in another letter to the same person, in 1808, she says; "I cherish her memory with holy veneration, whose maxims I

have treasured up, whose virtues live in my remembrance ; happy if I cou'd say, they have been transplanted into my life."

But, though her early years were spent in a spot of so great seclusion as her grandfather's house must then have been, it does not appear that she remained wholly unacquainted with young persons of her own sex and age. She had relations and connexions, both on the father's and the mother's side ; and with these she was upon as intimate terms as circumstances would allow. The distance between the homes of the young people was, however, too great, and the means of their parents too narrow, to admit of very frequent personal intercourse ; the substitute for which was a rapid interchange of written communications. The letter-writing propensity manifested itself early in this youthful circle. A considerable number of the epistles of her correspondents have been preserved among the papers of Mrs. Adams. They are deserving of notice only as they furnish a general idea of the tastes and pursuits of the young women of that day. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about them is the evident influence upon the writers, which the study of "The Spectator," and of the poets, appears to have had. This is perceptible in the more important train of thought and structure of lan-

guage, as well as in the lesser trifles of the taste for quotation and for fictitious signatures. Calliope and Myra, Arpasia and Aurelia, have effectually succeeded in disguising their true names from the eyes of younger generations. The signature of Miss Smith appears to have been *Diana*, a name which she dropped after her marriage, without losing the fancy that prompted to its selection. Her letters, during the Revolution, show clearly enough the tendency of her own thoughts and feelings in the substitute, she then adopted, of *Portia*. Her fondness for quotations, the fashion of that day, it will be seen, was maintained through life.

Perhaps there is no species of exercise, in early life, more productive of results useful to the mind, than that of writing letters. Over and above the mechanical facility of constructing sentences, which no teaching will afford so well, the interest with which the object is commonly pursued, gives an extraordinary impulse to the intellect. This is promoted, in a degree proportionate to the scarcity of temporary and local subjects for discussion. Where there is little gossip, the want of it must be supplied from books. The flowers of literature spring up where the weeds of scandal take no root. The young ladies of Massachusetts, in the last century, were certainly readers, even though

only self-taught; and their taste was not for the feeble and nerveless sentiment, or the frantic passion, which comes from the novels and romances in the circulating library of our day, but was derived from the deepest wells of English literature. The poets and moralists of the mother country furnished to these inquiring minds their ample stores, and they were used to an extent, which it is at least doubtful if the more pretending and elaborate instruction of the present generation would equal.

Of Mrs. Adams's letters during this period of her youth, but very few remain in possession of her descendants. One specimen has been accidentally obtained, which makes the first in the present publication. The writer was, at the date of the letter, not quite seventeen, and was addressing a lady some years older than herself. This may account for a strain of gravity rather beyond her years or ordinary disposition. Two other letters, written to Mr. Adams, after she was betrothed, and before she was married to him, have been added, because they are believed to be more indicative of her usual temper at that age. These have been admitted to a place in the selection, not so much as claiming a particular merit, as because they are thought to furnish a standard of her mind, and general character, when a girl, by which the improve-

ment and full developement of her powers as a woman may readily be measured.

The father of Mrs. Adams was a pious man, with something of that vein of humor, not uncommon among the clergy of New England, which ordinarily found such a field for exercise as is displayed in the pages of Cotton Mather. He was the father of three daughters, all of them women of uncommon force of intellect, though the fortunes of two of them confined its influence to a sphere much more limited than that which fell to the lot of Mrs. Adams. Mary, the eldest, was married, in 1762, to Richard Cranch, an English emigrant, who had settled at Germantown, a part of Braintree, and who subsequently became a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas in Massachusetts, and died, highly respected, in the early part of the present century. The present William Cranch, of Washington, who has presided so long, and with so much dignity and fidelity, over the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia, is the son of this marriage. Elizabeth, the youngest, was twice married; first, to the Reverend John Shaw, minister of Haverhill, in Massachusetts, and, after his death, to the Reverend Mr. Peabody, of Atkinson, New Hampshire. Thus much is necessary to be stated, in order to explain the relations, which the parties, in many

of the letters, bore to each other. It is an anecdote, told of Mr. Smith, that, upon the marriage of his eldest daughter, he preached to his people from the text in the forty-second verse of the tenth chapter of Luke, "And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Two years elapsed, and his second daughter, the subject of this notice, was about to marry John Adams, then a lawyer in good practice, when some disapprobation of the match appears to have manifested itself among a portion of his parishioners. The profession of law was, for a long period in the colonial history of Massachusetts, unknown; and, after circumstances called it forth, the prejudices of the inhabitants, who thought it a calling hardly honest, were arrayed against those who adopted it. There are many still living, who can remember how strong they remained, even down to the time of the adoption of the present Federal Constitution; and the records of the General Court, at its very last session, of 1840, will show, that they have not quite disappeared at this day. Besides this, the family of Mr. Adams, the son of a small farmer of the middle class in Braintree, was thought scarcely good enough to match with the minister's daughter, descended from so many of the shining lights of the colony. It is probable, that Mr. Smith was

made aware of the opinions expressed among his people, for he is said, immediately after the marriage took place, to have replied to them by a sermon, the text of which, in evident allusion to the objection against lawyers, was drawn from Luke vii. 33; "For John came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and ye say, *He hath a devil.*"¹

Mrs. Adams was married on the 25th of October, 1764, having then nearly completed her twentieth year. The ten years immediately following present little that is worthy of recording. She appears to have passed a quiet, and apparently very happy life, having her residence in Braintree, or in Boston, according as the state of her husband's health, then rather impaired, or that of his professional practice, made the change advisable. Within this period she became the mother of a daughter, and of three sons, whose names will frequently appear in her letters; and her domestic cares were reliev-

¹ As this anecdote rests entirely upon tradition, it has been differently told; and it is here admitted in this form rather as a characteristic feature of the age, and of the individual, than from any positive reliance upon its accuracy. There are yet transmitted, among the inhabitants of Weymouth and Hingham, many stories of Mr. Smith's application of texts, in a similar manner, to the events of the Revolution, which render the truth of this far from improbable.

ed by the presence of her husband, who was absent from home only upon those occasions, when he, with the other lawyers of his time, was compelled to follow the court in its circuits. During these times, he used to write regularly to his wife, an account of his adventures and of his professional success. These letters remain, and furnish a curious record of the manners and customs of the provincial times. She does not appear to have often replied to them. The only example is given in the present volume, and makes the fourth of the selection; a letter, remarkable only for the picture it presents of peaceful domestic life, in contrast to the stormy period immediately succeeding.

It is said by Governor Hutchinson, in the third volume of his History, that neither the health of Mr. Adams, nor his business, admitted of his constant application to public affairs in the manner that distinguished his kinsman, Samuel Adams, during the years preceding the breaking out of the Revolution. If the sum of that application is to be measured by the frequency of his appearance before the public as an actor in an official character upon the scene, the remark is true; for, up to the year 1774, he had served but once or twice as a representative in the General Court, and in no other situation. But this would furnish a very unfair

standard, by which to try the extent of his labors for the public. Very often, as much is done by beforehand preparing the public mind for action, as by the conduct of that action after it has been commenced; although the visible amount of exertion, by which alone the world forms its judgments, is in the two cases widely different. From the time of his marriage, in 1764, perhaps still earlier, when he, as a young lawyer, in 1761, took notes of the argument in the celebrated cause of the Writs of Assistance, there is evidence constantly presented of his active interest in the Revolutionary struggle. There is hardly a year in the interval between the earliest of these dates, and 1774, that the traces of his hand are not visible in the newspapers of Boston, elaborately discussing the momentous questions, which preceded the crisis. It was during this period, that the "Essay on Canon and Feudal Law" was written. A long controversy with Major Brattle, upon the payment of the judges, and the papers of "Novanglus," were other, though by no means all, the results of his labors. He drafted several of the papers of Instructions to the Representatives to the General Court, both in Boston and in his native town, and also some of the most elaborate legal portions of the celebrated controversy between that body and Governor Hutchinson.

The tendency, which all these papers show, to seek for political truth in its fundamental principles and most abstract forms, whilst it takes off much from the interest with which the merely general reader would now consider them, is yet of historical importance, as establishing the fact, how little of mere impulse there was in his mode of action against the mother country. They also show the extent of the studies to which his mind applied itself, and the depth of the foundation laid by him for his subsequent career. Yet, during all this time, his professional labors were never intermitted, and ceased only with the catastrophe which shut up the courts of justice, and rendered exertion upon a different theatre absolutely necessary to the maintenance of the fabric of society.

Perhaps the preceding detail belongs more properly to a memoir of Mr. Adams, than to that of his wife. Yet it would be impossible to furnish any accurate idea of her character, without explaining the precise nature of the influences acting upon her, whilst still young, and when that character was taking its permanent form. There was no one, who witnessed his studies with greater interest, or who sympathized with him in the conclusions, to which his mind was forcing him, more deeply, than Mrs. Adams. And hence it was, that, as the

day of trial came, and the hour for action drew near, she was found not unprepared to submit to the lot appointed her. Mr. Adams was elected one of the delegates on the part of Massachusetts, instructed to meet persons chosen in the same manner from the other colonies, for the purpose of consulting in common upon the course most advisable to be adopted by them. In the month of August, 1774, he left home, in company with Samuel Adams, Thomas Cushing, and Robert Treat Paine, to go to Philadelphia, at which place the proposed assembly was to be held. It is from this period, that the correspondence, Mrs. Adams's portion of which is now submitted to the public, becomes interesting. The letter of the 19th of August of this year¹ portrays her own feelings upon this, the first separation of importance from her husband, and the anxiety with which she was watching the course of events. Yet there is in it not a syllable of regret for the past, or of fear for the future; but, on the contrary, an acute perception of the obstacles in the way of an immediate return to peaceful times, and a deliberate preparation, by reading and reflection, for the worst. The Congress confined itself, in its first sessions, to consultation and remonstrance. It

¹ Vol. I. page 13.

therefore adjourned after the lapse of only two months. It is during this time, that the five letters in the present volume which bear date in 1774, were written. They furnish a lively exhibition of the state of public feeling in Massachusetts. That dated on the 14th of September, is particularly interesting, as it gives an account of the securing the gunpowder from the British, in her own town of Braintree, as well as a highly characteristic trait of New England, in the refusal to cheer on a Sunday. The last of this series, dated on the 16th of October, shows that all remaining hopes of peace and reconciliation were fast vanishing from her mind; and in an affecting manner she "bids adieu to domestic felicity perhaps until the meeting with her husband in another world, since she looks forward to nothing further in this than sacrifices, as the result of the impending contest."¹

The second meeting of the Congress, which took place in May, 1775, was marked by events which wholly changed the nature of its deliberations. Up to that period, the struggle had been only a dispute. It then took the more fearful shape of a war. Mr. Adams left his house and family at Braintree on the 14th of

¹ Vol. I. page 26.

April, only five days before the memorable incident at Lexington, which was a signal for the final appeal to arms. The news of the affair reached him at Hartford, on his way to Philadelphia. General Gage had planned his attack upon Lexington with the knowledge that John Hancock and Samuel Adams, two of the delegates to the general Congress, were in that place at the time; and it was probably one of his objects to seize them, if they could be found. Gordon, the historian, attributes their escape only to a friendly warning given them by a woman residing in Boston, but "unequally yoked in politics." There was nearly the same reason for apprehension on the part of John Adams. His house was situated still nearer to Boston, could be more easily approached by water, and his family, if not he himself, was known to be residing there. Under these circumstances, what the feelings of Mrs. Adams, left with the care of four small children, the eldest not ten years of age, must have been, may readily be conceived. But the letters, in which she describes them, bring the idea home to the mind with still greater force. She tells us, that, upon the separation from her husband, "her heart had felt like a heart of lead," and that "she never trusts herself long with the terrors that sometimes intrude themselves upon

her ;" that " since the never-to-be-forgotten day of his departure, the 14th of April, nothing had agitated her so much as the news of the arrival of recruits ;" and that, " she lives in continual expectation of alarms." Neither were these apprehensions altogether groundless. The letter of the 4th of May mentions that Colonel Quincy's family, whose residence was nearer to the water-side than hers, had taken refuge for one night with her. That of the 24th, gives a highly vivid picture of the consternation into which the whole town was thrown by a party of British, foraging upon an island in the harbour, close upon the town. Then follow the account of the battle on Bunker's Hill, and the burning of Charlestown, dreadful events to those in the immediate vicinity of Boston and to herself; yet, in the midst of them, the writer adds, that she is " distressed, but not dismayed," and that " she has been able to maintain a calmness and presence of mind, and hopes she shall, let the exigency of the time be what it will." ¹

But it is superfluous to endeavour to heighten the picture given in the letters with so much distinctness. Mr. Adams seems to have been startled on the arrival of the intelligence at

¹ Vol. I. pages 30—43.

Hartford. Conscious, however, that his return would rather tend to add to, than diminish, the hazard to which his family was exposed, he contented himself with writing encouragement, and, at the same time, his directions in case of positive danger. "In a cause which interests the whole globe," he says, "at a time when my friends and country are in such keen distress, I am scarcely ever interrupted in the least degree by apprehensions for my personal safety. I am often concerned for you and our dear babes, surrounded, as you are, by people who are too timorous, and too much susceptible of alarms. Many fears and jealousies and imaginary evils will be suggested to you, but I hope you will not be impressed by them. In case of real danger, of which you cannot fail to have previous intimations, fly to the woods with our children."

Mr. Adams very well knew to whom he was recommending such an appalling alternative, the very idea of which would have been intolerable to many women. The trial Mrs. Adams was called to undergo from the fears of those immediately around her, was one in addition to that caused by her own apprehensions; a trial, it may be remarked, of no ordinary nature; since it demands the exercise of a presence of mind and accuracy of judgment in distinguish-

ing the false from the true, that falls to the lot of few even of the stronger sex. It is the tendency of women in general, to suffer quite as much anxiety from the activity of the imagination, as if it was, in every instance, founded upon reasonable cause.

But the sufferings of this remarkable year were not limited to the mind alone. The terrors of war were accompanied with the ravages of pestilence. Mr. Adams was at home during the period of adjournment of the Congress, which was only for the month of August; but scarcely had he crossed his threshold, when the dysentery, a disease which had already signified its approach in scattering instances about the neighbourhood of the besieged town of Boston where it had commenced, assumed a highly epidemic character, and marked its victims in every family. A younger brother of Mr. Adams had fallen among the earliest in the town; but it was not till his departure for Philadelphia, that almost every member of his own household was seized. The letters written during the month of September, 1775, besides being exclusively personal, are too uniformly mournful in their tone to be suitable for insertion in full in the present collection; yet it would be failing to give an accurate idea of the character of Mrs. Adams, to omit a notice of

them altogether. A few extracts, reserved for this personal narrative, have been thought likely to answer the purpose better than if they were submitted in full to the public eye.

On the 8th of September, she commences thus ;

“ Since you left me, I have passed through great distress both of body and mind ; and whether greater is to be my portion, Heaven only knows. You may remember Isaac was unwell when you went from home. His disorder increased, until a violent dysentery was the consequence of his complaints. There was no resting-place in the house for his terrible groans. He continued in this state nearly one week, when his disorder abated, and we have now hopes of his recovery. Two days after he was sick, I was seized in a violent manner. Had I known you were at Watertown, I should have sent Bracket for you. I suffered greatly between my inclination to have you return, and my fear of sending, lest you should be a partaker of the common calamity. After three days, an abatement of my disease relieved me from that anxiety. The next person in the same week, was Susy ; her we carried home, and hope she will not be very bad. Our little Tommy was the next, and he lies very ill now. Yesterday Patty was seized. Our house is a

hospital in every part, and, what with my own weakness and distress of mind for my family, I have been unhappy enough. And such is the distress of the neighbourhood, that I can scarcely find a well person to assist me in looking after the sick."

On the 16th, after saying that her letter will be only a bill of mortality, and that, of all the members of her household, one only had escaped the disorder, she adds;

"The dread upon the minds of people of catching the distemper is almost as great as if it was the small-pox. I have been distressed, more than ever I was in my life, to procure watchers and to get assistance. We have been four Sabbaths without any meeting. Thus does pestilence travel in the rear of war, to remind us of our entire dependence upon that Being, who not only directeth the 'arrow by day,' but has also at His command 'the pestilence which walketh in darkness.' So uncertain and so transitory are all the enjoyments of life, that, were it not for the tender connexions which bind us, would it not be a folly to wish for a continuance here?"

On the 25th, she mentions the illness of her mother.

"I sit down with a heavy heart to write to you. I have had no other since you left me.

Woe follows woe, and one affliction treads upon the heels of another. My distress in my own family having in some measure abated, it is excited anew upon that of my dear mother. Her kindness brought her to see me every day when I was ill, and our little Thomas. She has taken the disorder, and lies so bad, that we have little hope of her recovery."

On the 29th;

"It is allotted me to go from the sick and almost dying bed of one of the best of parents, to my own habitation, where again I behold the same scene, only varied by a remoter connexion,

'A bitter change, severer for severe.'

You can more easily conceive than I describe, what are the sensations of my heart when absent from either, continually expecting a messenger with the fatal tidings."

Then follows the letter of the 1st of October, which, as making the climax of her distress, is inserted at length in this volume.¹ The following week, Patty, the female domestic mentioned as the other sick person, also died; after which, there appears to have been no return of the disease. But among all the trying scenes of the

¹ Vol. I. page 67.

war of the Revolution, it is doubtful whether any much exceeded this.

"The desolation of war is not so distressing," she writes, "as the havoc made by the pestilence. Some poor parents are mourning the loss of three, four, and five children; and some families are wholly stripped of every member."

Such as these are the kinds of trial, of which history takes little or no note, yet in which female fortitude is most severely exercised. Without designing to detract from the unquestioned merit of that instrument, it must nevertheless be affirmed, that the Declaration of Independence, called by the celebrated John Randolph "a fanfaronade of abstractions," might very naturally be expected to reward the efforts of its signers with a crown of immortality; whilst the large share of the cost of maintaining it, wrung from the bleeding hearts of the women of the Revolution, was paid without any hope or expectation of a similar compensation.

Mr. Adams was again at home in the month of December, during the sessions of the Congress, which were now continued without intermission. It was upon his departure for the third time, that the long and very remarkable letter, bearing date March 2d, 1776,¹ and con-

¹ Vol. I. p. 87.

tinued through several days, was written ; a letter composed in the midst of the din of war, and describing hopes and fears in a manner deeply interesting. With this the description of active scenes in the war terminates. The British force soon afterwards evacuated Boston and Massachusetts, which did not again become the field of military action. The correspondence now changes its character. From containing accounts of stirring events directly under the writer's eye, the letters assume a more private form, and principally relate to the management of the farm and the household. Few of these would be likely to amuse the general reader ; yet some are necessary, as specimens of a portion of the author's character. Mr. Adams was never a man of large fortune. His profession, which had been a source of emolument, was now entirely taken away from him ; and his only dependence for the support of his family was in the careful husbanding of the means in actual possession. It is not giving to his wife too much credit to affirm, that by her prudence through the years of the Revolution, and indeed during the whole period when the attention of her husband was engrossed by public affairs, she saved him from the mortification in his last days, which some of those who have been, like him, elevated to the highest situations in the

country, have, for want of such care, not altogether escaped.

In the month of November, 1777, Mr. Adams again visited his home, and never afterwards rejoined the Congress; for that body, in his absence, had elected him to perform a duty in a distant land. This was destined to furnish a severe trial to the fortitude of Mrs. Adams. On the 25th of October, she had written a letter to him, it being the anniversary of their wedding-day, in which she notices the fact, that "out of thirteen years of their married life, three had been passed in a state of separation." Yet in these years, the distance between them had never been very great, and the means of communication almost always reasonably speedy and certain. She appears little to have anticipated, that in a few short weeks she was to be deprived of even these compensations, and to send her husband to a foreign country, over seas covered with the enemy's ships. "I very well remember," she says, in an earlier letter, "when the eastern circuits of the courts, which lasted a month, were thought an age, and an absence of three months, intolerable; but we are carried from step to step, and from one degree to another, to endure that which first we think insupportable." It was in exact accordance with this process, that the separations of half a year or more were to be followed by those which

lasted many years, and the distance from Boston to Philadelphia or Baltimore was lengthened to Paris and a different quarter of the globe. Upon the reception of the news of his appointment as joint commissioner at the court of France, in the place of Silas Deane, Mr. Adams lost no time in making his arrangements for the voyage. But it was impossible for him to think of risking his wife and children all at once with him in so perilous an enterprise. The frigate *Boston*, a small, and not very good vessel, mounting twenty-eight guns, had been ordered to transport him to his destination. The British fleet, stationed at Newport, perfectly well knew the circumstances under which she was going, and was on the watch to favor the new commissioner with a fate similar to that afterwards experienced by Mr. Laurens. The political attitude of France still remained equivocal. Hence, on every account, it seemed advisable that Mr. Adams should go upon his mission alone. He left the shores of his native town to embark in the frigate, in February, 1778, accompanied only by his eldest son, John Quincy Adams, then a boy not quite eleven years of age.

It is not often that, even upon that boisterous ocean, a voyage combines greater perils of war and of the elements, than did this of the *Boston*.

Yet it is by no means unlikely, that the lightning which struck the frigate, and the winds that nearly sent it to the bottom, were effective instruments to deter the enemy from a pursuit which threatened to end in capture. This is not, however, the place to enlarge upon this story. It is alluded to only as connected with the uneasiness experienced by Mrs. Adams, who was left alone to meditate upon the hazard to which her husband was exposed. Her letter, written not long after the sailing of the frigate, distinctly shows her feelings.¹ But we find by it, that, to all the causes for anxiety which would naturally have occurred to her mind, there was superadded one growing out of a rumor then in circulation, that some British emissary had made an attempt upon the life of Dr. Franklin, whilst acting at Paris in the very commission, of which her husband had been made a part. This was a kind of apprehension as new as it was distressing; one too, the vague nature of which tended infinitely to multiply those terrors that had a better foundation in reality.

The news of the surrender of General Burgoyne had done more to hasten the desired acknowledgment, by France, of the independence of the United States, than all the efforts which

¹ Vol. I. page 116.

Commissioners could have made. Upon his arrival in France, Mr. Adams found the great object of his mission accomplished, and himself, consequently, left with little or no occupation. He did not wait in Europe to know the further wishes of Congress, but returned home in August, 1779. Only a brief enjoyment of his society by his family was the result, inasmuch as in October he was again ordered by Congress to go to Europe, and there to wait until Great Britain should manifest an inclination to treat with him, and terminate the war. In obedience to these directions, he sailed in November on board of the French frigate *Sensible*, taking with him upon this occasion his two eldest sons. The day of his embarkation is marked by a letter in the present collection, quite touching in its character.¹

The ordinary occupations of the female sex are necessarily of a kind which must ever prevent it from partaking largely of the action of life. However keenly women may think or feel, there is seldom an occasion when the sphere of their exertions can with propriety be extended much beyond the domestic hearth or the social circle. Exactly here are they to be seen most in their glory. Three or four years passed whilst Mrs. Adams was living in the utmost

¹ Vol. I. page 142.

seclusion of country life, during which, on account of the increasing vigilance of British cruisers, she very seldom heard from her husband. The material for interesting letters was proportionately small, and yet there was no time when she was more usefully occupied. It is impossible to omit all notice of this period, however deficient it may prove in variety. The depreciation of the Continental paper money, the difficulties in the way of managing the property of her husband, her own isolation, and the course of public events in distant parts of the country, form her constant topics. Only a small number of the letters which discuss them, yet enough to show her situation at this period, have been admitted into these volumes. They are remarkable, because they display the readiness with which she could devote herself to the most opposite duties, and the cheerful manner in which she could accommodate herself to the difficulties of the times. She is a farmer cultivating the land, and discussing the weather and the crops; a merchant reporting prices-current and the rates of exchange, and directing the making up of invoices; a politician speculating upon the probabilities of peace or war; and a mother writing the most exalted sentiments to her son. All of these pursuits she adopts together; some from choice, the rest

from the necessity of the case; and in all she appears equally well. Yet, among the letters of this period, there will be found two or three, which rise in their tone very far above the rest, and which can scarcely fail to awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader.¹

The signature of the Treaty of Peace with Great Britain, which fully established the Independence of the United States, did not terminate the residence of Mr. Adams in Europe. He was ordered by Congress to remain there, and, in conjunction with Dr. Franklin and Mr. Jefferson, to establish by treaty commercial relations with foreign powers. And not long afterwards a new commission was sent him as the first representative of the nation to him who had been their King. The duties prescribed seemed likely to require a residence sufficiently long to authorize him in a request that Mrs. Adams should join him in Europe. After some hesitation, she finally consented; and, in June, 1784, she sailed from Boston in a merchant vessel bound to London. The journal of her voyage, given in a letter to her sister, Mrs. Cranch, makes a part of the present collection.² From this date the correspondence assumes a

¹ Vol. I. pages 168, 172, 175.

² Vol. II. page 3.

new character. Mrs. Adams found herself, at the age of forty, suddenly transplanted into a scene wholly new. From a life of the utmost retirement, in a small and quiet country town of New England, she was at once transferred to the busy and bustling scenes of the populous and wealthy cities of Europe. Not only was her position novel to herself, but there had been nothing like it among her countrywomen. She was the first representative of her sex from the United States at the Court of Great Britain. The impressions made upon her mind were therefore received when it was uncommonly open, and free from the ordinary restraints which an established routine of precedents is apt to create. Her residence in France during the first year of her European experience appears to have been much enjoyed, notwithstanding the embarrassment felt by her from not speaking the language. That in England, which lasted three years, was somewhat affected by the temper of the sovereign. George and his Queen could not get over the mortification attending the loss of the American Colonies, nor at all times suppress the manifestation of it, when the presence of their Minister forced the subject on their recollection. Mrs. Adams's account of her presentation is among the letters

of this period.¹ It was not more than civilly met on the part of the Queen, whose subsequent conduct was hardly so good as on that occasion. Mrs. Adams appears never to have forgotten it; for at a much later period, when, in consequence of the French Revolution, the throne of England was thought to be in danger, she writes to her daughter with regret at the prospect for the country, but without sympathy for the Queen. "Humiliation for Charlotte," she says, "is no sorrow for me. She richly deserves her full portion for the contempt and scorn which she took pains to discover." Of course, the courtiers followed the lead thus given to them, and the impression made against America at the very outset of its national career has hardly been effaced down to this day. It is to be observed, however, that one circumstance contributed to operate against the situation of the first American Minister to Great Britain, which has affected none of his successors. This was the conduct of the States whilst yet under the Confederation, justifying the general impression that they were incapable of the self-government, the right to which they had so zealously fought to obtain. Of the effect of this upon herself, Mrs. Adams will be found frequently to speak.

¹ 24 June, 1785.

Yet, notwithstanding these drawbacks, she seems to have enjoyed much her residence in the mother country. Her letters to her sisters during this period have been admitted almost *in extenso* in the present volume. They describe no scenes of particular novelty to the reading public, it is true; but they delineate in so natural and easy a manner the impressions received from objects new to the writer, that it is hoped they will fully reward perusal. The period was not without its peculiar character to Americans. Their country, exhausted by her efforts in the war of Independence, had not yet put herself in the way of restoration by adopting a good form of government. It was even a matter of doubt whether her liberty was likely to prove a blessing, or to degenerate into a curse. On the other hand, France, Holland, and Great Britain respectively presented an outward spectacle of wealth and prosperity not perceptibly impaired by the violent struggle between them, that had just terminated. This contrast is frequently marked in the letters of Mrs. Adams; but the perception of it does not appear to have in any degree qualified the earnestness of her attachment to her own very modest home. "Whatever is to be the fate of our country," she says to her sister, "we have determined to

come home and share it with you.”¹ She had very little of that susceptibility of transfer, which is a characteristic, not less of the cultivated and wealthy class of our countrymen, who cling to the luxury of the old world, than of the adventurous and hardy sons of labor, who carve out for themselves a new home in the forests of the West.

The return of Mr. Adams, with his family, to the United States, the liberty for which was granted by Congress to his own request, was simultaneous with the adoption of the present Constitution by the decision of the ratifying Conventions. Upon the organization of the government under the new form, he was elected to fill the office of Vice-President, that of President being, by a more general consent, awarded to General Washington. By this arrangement, a residence at the seat of government during the sessions of the Senate was made necessary; and, as that was fixed first at New York, and then at Philadelphia, Mrs. Adams enjoyed an opportunity to mix freely with the society of both places. Some of her letters descriptive of it have been selected for publication in this collection.

The voluntary retirement of General Washington, at the end of eight years, from the

¹ 25 February, 1787.

Presidency, was the signal for the great struggle between the two political parties, which had been rapidly maturing their organization, during his term of administration. Mr. Adams was elected his successor by a bare majority of the electoral colleges, and against the inclinations of one section even of that party which supported him. The open defection of that section, at the following election, turned the scale against him, and brought Mr. Jefferson into his place. Of course, the letters of Mrs. Adams, at this period, largely partake of the excitement of the day. From early life, she had learnt to take a deep interest in the course of political affairs, and it is not to be supposed that this would decline, whilst her husband was a chief actor in the scene, and a butt for the most malignant shafts which party animosity could throw. As it is not the design of this publication to revive any old disputes, most of these letters have been excluded from it. Two or three exceptions, however, have been made. The first is the letter of the 8th of February, 1797, the day upon which the votes for President were counted, and Mr. Adams, as Vice-President, was required by law to announce himself the President elect for the ensuing term. This, though extremely short, appears to the Editor to be the gem of the collection; for the exalted feeling of

the moment shines out with all the lustre of ancient patriotism. Perhaps there is not, among the whole number of her letters, one which, in its spirit, brings so strongly to mind, as this does, the celebrated Roman lady, whose signature she at one time assumed; whilst it is chastened by a sentiment of Christian humility, of which ancient history furnishes no example.

At this time, the health of Mrs. Adams, which had never been very firm, began decidedly to fail. Her residence at Philadelphia had not been favorable, as it had subjected her to the attack of an intermittent fever, from the effects of which she was never afterwards perfectly free. The desire to enjoy the bracing air of her native climate, as well as to keep together the private property of her husband, upon which she early foresaw that he would be obliged to rely for their support in their last years, prompted her to reside, much of the time, at Quincy. Such was the name now given to that part of the ancient town of Braintree, in which she had always lived. Yet when at the seat of Government, whether in Philadelphia or Washington, the influence of her kindly feelings and cheerful temper did much to soften the asperities of the time. A good idea of the privations and discomforts, to which she was subjected in the President's House at Washington, when

that place had scarcely emerged from the primitive forest, may be formed from one or two other letters, which, in this view, are excepted from the general exclusion.¹ In the midst of public or private troubles, the buoyant spirit of Mrs. Adams never forsook her. "I am a mortal enemy," she writes upon one occasion to her husband, "to any thing but a cheerful countenance and a merry heart, which, Solomon tells us, does good like a medicine." This spirit contributed greatly to lift up his heart, when surrounded by difficulties and danger, exposed to open hostility and secret detraction, and resisting a torrent of invective, such as it may well be doubted whether any other individual in public station in the United States has ever tried to stem. It was this spirit, which soothed his wounded feelings, when the country, which he had served in the full consciousness of the perfect honesty of his motives, threw him off, and signified its preference for other statesmen. There often are, even in this life, more compensations for the severest of the troubles that afflict mankind, than we are apt to think. It may be questioned whether Mr. Adams's more successful rival, who, in the day of his power, wielded popular masses with far greater skill and success than he, ever realized, in the hours

¹ 21 and 27 November, 1800.

of his subsequent retirement, any consolation for his pecuniary embarrassments, like that which Mr. Adams enjoyed from the faithful devotedness of his wife, and, it may be added, the successful labors of his son.

There were many persons, in the lifetime of the parties, who ascribed to Mrs. Adams a degree of influence over the public conduct of her husband, far greater than there was any foundation for in truth. Perhaps it is giving more than its due importance to this idea to take any notice at all of it in this place. But the design of this Memoir is to set forth, in as clear a light as possible, the character of its subject; and this cannot well be done without a full explanation of her personal relations to those about her. That her opinions, even upon public affairs, had at all times great weight with her husband, is unquestionably true, for he frequently marked upon her letters his testimony to their solidity; but there is no evidence, that they either originated or materially altered any part of the course he had laid out for himself. Whenever she differed in sentiment from him, which was sometimes the case, she perfectly well understood her own position, and that the best way of recommending her views was by entire concession. The character of Mr. Adams is clearly visible in his own papers. Ardent,

vehement in support of what he believed to be right, easily roused to anger by opposition, but sincere, placable, and generous, when made conscious of having committed the slightest wrong, there is no individual of this time, about whom there are so few concealments, of either faults or virtues. Instances of his imprudence are visible, and of the mode in which his wife treated them, in at least two letters of this volume.¹ She was certain that a word said, not at the moment of irritation, but immediately after it had passed, would receive great consideration from him. She therefore waited the favorable time, and thus, by the calmness of her judgment, exercised a species of negative influence, which often prevented evil consequences from momentary indiscretion. But her power extended no farther, nor did she seek to make it do so, and in this consisted her principal merit. Perhaps it may be added, that, to men of ardent and excitable temperament, no virtue is more necessary in a wife, and none more essential to the happiness and prosperity of both the parties, than that which has been now described.

Four letters addressed to Mr. Jefferson in the year 1804 have been admitted into the present collection for reasons which require a particular

¹ Letters of 10 January, 1785, and 21 November, 1786.

explanation. The answers written by that gentleman were published some time since in the collection of his works made under the authority and supervision of his grandson, Mr. Thomas Jefferson Randolph, though unaccompanied by any comment which could show what it was that they replied to or how Mrs. Adams got into the rather singular position which she occupies of a disputant with him upon the leading political questions of the time. In order to understand this, it is necessary to go back and trace the early relations between the parties and the reasons why those relations were afterwards changed. Mr. Jefferson went to Europe at nearly the same time with Mrs. Adams. Their residence there was of similar duration, though not always in the same place. Throughout the period of that residence an active interchange of good offices was carried on between them. The official connexion that existed between Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Adams, while the latter remained in France, was improved into a pleasant social intimacy. And out of the small circle of Americans, whom Mrs. Adams met with in that country, Mr. Jefferson could hardly have failed to prove, as he did, by far the most agreeable individual to her. It will hence be seen, that upon her departure from Paris, the principal regret

which she expresses to her friend in America is at the necessity of leaving that gentleman—for “he,” she adds, “is one of the choice ones of the earth.”¹ Again, she manifests the confidence which she entertains, both in his patriotism and his personal friendship, in a letter written to another friend² after her arrival in London. Her kindly feelings were still further developed by the arrival of his little daughter from Virginia, and by the care she was requested by him to take of her during the brief interval that elapsed before he could send for her to join him. Indeed, so far did they go, that when the moment of departure took place, the affectionate regret which the child manifested at the separation, appears to have left an indelible impression upon her mind.³

From the incidental notices thus gathered out of Mrs. Adams’s private correspondence with her friends at home, it cannot be doubted, that up to the period of return to America of the parties now in question, the most amicable relations had existed without interruption between them. Even after that time, and when under the administration of President Washington, it be-

¹ Letter to Mrs. Shaw, 8 May, 1785.

² Letter to Mrs. Cranch, 1 October, 1785.

³ Letter to Mrs. Cranch, 16 July, 1787, and that to Mr. Jefferson, 20 May, 1804.

came certain that a difference in political sentiments must inevitably have the effect to throw two persons, so distinguished as Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Adams were, into collision, the social intimacy between them, though slightly relaxed, was not materially disturbed. The address of the former gentleman to the Senate, upon taking his place as Vice-President, shows the desire he then entertained to continue it. But events were destined to be stronger than men. The vehement contest for the Presidency in 1801 scattered to the winds all traces of former friendship. It was at that time that each party in turn strove to discover in certain overt acts of the other, a justification for estrangement, which would as certainly have occurred, whether those acts had or had not been committed with a design to give it a form of expression. It is not in the nature of men to be able entirely to resist the force of those passions which rivalry in a common object of ardent desire will stir up in their bosoms. The earnestness with which Mr. Jefferson endeavors to deny their operation upon him, whilst every page of his letters shows as clearly as light how much sway they had over him, constitutes the most serious impeachment that can be brought against his sincerity. There is an appearance of duplicity in this part of his conduct which it is difficult altogether to

explain away. The writer does not however attach great weight to the charge in this instance. For the fact can scarcely be doubted, that both Mr. Adams and Mr. Jefferson tried, as hard as men could do, to resist the natural effect upon them of their antagonist positions. They strove, each in turn, to stem the proscriptive fury of the parties to which they belonged, and that with equally bad success. But as the mode in which they attempted it is singularly illustrative of the opposite character of the two men, perhaps it may not be without its use to the present generation, to venture upon a feeble description of it.

It is a well attested fact, that Mr. Adams hardly attained to the Presidency before he began to devise a mode by which he could bring into office those leading individuals of the party politically opposed to him whom he personally esteemed. His offers to Mr. Jefferson, to Mr. Madison and to Mr. Gerry, the last of whom only accepted them, are perfectly well known. These offers were not however made without prodigious resistance on the part of numbers of his own political friends, and probably contributed much to weaken the attachment of many, and to promote the disaffection of more of them. The consequence was his fall from power as the penalty of a disregard to

prudent counsels. . On the other hand, Mr. Jefferson, when elected to the same office, though professing much good will towards, and personal esteem of his opponent, Mr. Adams, yet candidly admits¹ that he suffered the dictates of his heart to be overruled by the decided negative interposed to action upon them on the part of his partisan advisers. It is not probable, that, even had he carried into effect his proposed design to offer to Mr. Adams an office of trust and profit in Massachusetts, this gentleman would have accepted it; but the offer alone would have been invaluable to him at the moment of defeat, as a testimonial openly given by his successful rival both to his public and private integrity. And it would have forever after estopped the friends of the victorious candidate from taking any ungenerous advantage of their victory over him.

But the prudence of Mr. Jefferson gained the mastery over his liberality of feeling. It went even further — for not content with doing nothing at all for his rival, he actually inflicted upon him a blow. He removed, without cause assigned, his son, John Quincy Adams, from a very subordinate office, the instant that it hap-

¹ See the "Memoir, Correspondence and Miscellanies, from the papers of Thomas Jefferson — edited by Thomas Jefferson Randolph." Vol. IV. p. 158.

pened to come within the reach of his reforming power. This was perhaps the act that carried with it the most of bitterness to Mr. and Mrs. Adams. It is no more than due to the author of it to add his explanation. He solemnly affirms that he made the removal without knowing whom he was removing. Perhaps the great majority of readers will agree with the writer in thinking much less unfavorably of the deed itself, than of the apology it was thought advisable to make for it.

For after all, it can never be any great impeachment of Mr. Jefferson to say that he attempted no serious opposition to the party torrent that bore him into power; a torrent which must always have its course in the United States, let who will endeavour to resist it. He knew the effort would be futile, and could be executed only to his own destruction. The true ground of exception against him is, that seeing and feeling the necessity of submission, he did not do it at once with perfect frankness. Considering the very high opinion which he continued to profess towards his rival, and which there is no doubt he felt when his interests were not so deeply involved as to lead him to suppress it, it would seem as if he was under some responsibility for the odium which it was in his day, and still is the pleasure of his

political disciples, very unjustly to cast upon Mr. Adams. There were, doubtless, great and radical differences of opinion upon abstract points in the theory of government, between the two gentlemen. And the soundness of their respective notions, as Mr. Jefferson truly remarks, yet remains to be tested by the passage of time and the world's experience. In the mean while, however, there is no more reason for condemning the one party on account of his opinions than the other. Yet, notwithstanding the frequent admission of this truth in his private letters, it can scarcely be denied, that Mr. Jefferson drew, during his public life, every possible advantage from the prevalence of a wholly opposite conviction in the popular mind. A very large number of the citizens of the Union were impressed not simply with a dislike of the sentiments of Mr. Adams, but with a conviction that our republican institutions were in danger from their predominance in his person. This conviction, which was never entertained by Mr. Jefferson, a few words inserted in any document, designed to be *public*, and from his own hand when President, would have gone very far to dispel. He never chose to give this form of utterance to them. It consequently happened, that whilst he could affirm that *in private*, "none ever misrepresented Mr. Adams

in his presence without his asserting his just character," his official conduct and the tone of all his political friends, was constantly giving a sanction to the grossest and most unequivocal misrepresentations of him. And whilst he was professing in secret a wish to give him an honorable office, his party was studiously making his very name a word of fear to all the less intelligent classes of the community. This inconsistency may have been, it is true, a consequence not so much of the will of Mr. Jefferson as of the necessity in which he was placed. Much allowance must often be made for the difficult positions of our public statesmen. He is also entitled to much credit for his voluntary efforts, in after life, to repair the injury he must have been aware he had committed. This conduct, on his part, was not without a degree of magnanimity, which may have its use, as an example to future political rivals in America. There will doubtless be many instances in our history, in which the victor in party strife will have gained much by fomenting popular prejudices against his opponent; but it is not equally certain, that there will be as many, in which he will afterwards endeavour to repair the injury done, by leaving behind him upon record the amplest testimonials to that opponent's public virtue.

It is by no means the disposition of the present writer to judge with an undue degree of harshness. But no duty appears to him more absolutely incumbent upon all who address the American public than that of exercising the faculty of clear, moral discrimination, and he should have felt himself deserving of censure if he had omitted to attempt it to this extent upon the present occasion.

Mrs. Adams felt, as women only feel, what she regarded as the ungenerous conduct of Mr. Jefferson towards her husband during the latter part of his public life. And when she retired from Washington, notwithstanding the kindest professions from his mouth were yet ringing in her ears, all communication between the parties ceased. Still, there remained on both sides, pleasant reminiscences to soften the irritation that had taken place, and to open a way for reconciliation whenever circumstances should present a suitable opportunity. The little daughter of Mr. Jefferson, in whom Mrs. Adams had taken so much interest in 1787, had in the interval grown into a woman, and had been married to Mr. Eppes, of Virginia. In 1804 she ceased to be numbered among the living. The intelligence of her death revived all the kind feelings that had long been smothered in the breast of Mrs. Adams, and impelled her, almost

against her judgment, to pen the short letter of condolence to the lady's father which makes the first of the series now submitted to the public. Mr. Jefferson appears to have been much affected by this testimony of her sympathy. He replied, but not confining himself to the subject matter of her letter, he added a request to know her reasons for the estrangement that had occurred. These reasons were given in the letters that follow, now and then betraying a little of the asperity to which the contest had given birth on each side. The correspondence ended without entire satisfaction to either. It appears, from Mr. Jefferson's statement, afterwards made in a letter to Dr. Rush, that he did not choose at first to believe Mrs. Adams's assertion that she had written to him without the knowledge of her husband. It further appears, that without any new evidence upon which to found a change of opinion, he afterwards convinced himself that what she had written was true. Fortunately, the original endorsement, made in the handwriting of Mr. Adams, upon the copy of the last of the letters retained by herself, will serve to put this matter beyond question. Readers will be apt to judge of the reasoning contained in the correspondence, according to the political prepossessions they may happen to entertain.

But whichsoever way they may incline, one thing they will all be glad to know, and of that they may be assured, namely, that the argument of Mrs. Adams was entirely her own. If it were not for this certainty, a great deduction would be necessary from the interest that must now be felt in her part of the correspondence. As the letters of a man, trained in the discipline and the logic of the schools, they would make but a poor figure against the plausible and adroit special pleading of the opposing party; but when viewed as the simple offspring of good sense and right feeling, combining in a woman to form just as well as straight-forward conclusions upon the most difficult public questions, they are not without their value, even though set in contrast to the polished productions of so celebrated a writer as Mr. Jefferson.

It has been already remarked, that the correspondence ended without appearing to produce any favourable effect in restoring the parties to their pristine cordiality. The principal reason for this, probably was, that Mr. Jefferson was still President of the United States; and that a change then brought about in consequence of a step first taken by Mrs. Adams, might have subjected her conduct to the possibility of misconstruction. This her spirit would never have willingly submitted to. Per-

haps the same consideration had its effect upon the general tone of her letters, which is not so conciliatory, as from other parts of her character, one might be led to expect. It was felt to be not so by Mr. Jefferson, who considered it as having interposed a new barrier to reconciliation, rather than as having removed the old ones. But such did not prove its ultimate effect. The parties relapsed into silence for a time, it is true, but there is evidence that they began again to think kindly of each other. And when they had come once more upon equal terms, by the retirement of Mr. Jefferson from public life, Dr. Rush, a common friend, found no great difficulty in removing all obstacles to a renewed communication. A correspondence was again established which gradually improved into something of the ancient kindliness. But Mrs. Adams appears to have taken no part in it; and it may be doubted whether it was before the beautiful letter¹ of condolence, written to him by Mr. Jefferson upon the news of her decease, that the heart of Mr. Adams softened

¹ Perhaps there is not, among all the productions of Mr. Jefferson, a more graceful and delicate specimen of his style than this short letter. As connected with the present subject, it may not be unacceptable to the reader to find it appended to the close of this Memoir.

into perfect cordiality towards his ancient and his successful opponent.

From the year 1801 down to the day of her death, which happened on the 28th of October, 1818, she remained uninterruptedly at home in Quincy. This period furnishes abundance of familiar letters. Her interest in public affairs did not cease with the retirement of her husband. She continued to write to her friends her free opinions, both of men and measures, perhaps with a more sustained hand on account of the share her son was then taking in politics. But these letters bring us down to times so recent, and they contain so many allusions to existing persons and matters of a domestic and wholly private nature, that they are not deemed suitable for publication, at least at present. On some accounts, this is perhaps to be regretted. None of her letters present a more agreeable picture of life, or a more characteristic idea of their author, than these. The old age of Mrs. Adams was not one of grief and repining, of clouds and darkness. Her cheerfulness continued, with the full possession of her faculties, to the last; and her sunny spirit enlivened the small social circle around her, brightened the solitary hours of her husband, and spread the influence of its example over the town where she lived. "Yesterday," she writes to a grand-

daughter on the 26th of October, 1814, "yesterday completes half a century since I entered the married state, then just your age. I have great cause of thankfulness, that I have lived so long, and enjoyed so large a portion of happiness as has been my lot. The greatest source of unhappiness I have known in that period has arisen from the long and cruel separations, which I was called, in a time of war and with a young family around me, to submit to." Yet she had not been without her domestic afflictions. A daughter lost in infancy; a son grown up to manhood, who died in 1800; and thirteen years afterwards, the death of her only remaining daughter, the wife of Colonel W. S. Smith, furnished causes of deep and severe grief, which threw a shadow of sadness over the evening of her life. But they produced no permanent gloom, nor did they prevent her from enjoying the consolations to be found in gratitude to the Divine Being for the blessings that still remained to her. She was rewarded for the painful separation from her eldest son, when he went abroad in the public service under circumstances which threatened a long absence, by surviving the whole period of eight years that it lasted, and witnessing his return to receive from the Chief Magistrate elect, Mr. Monroe, the highest testimony he could give him of his

confidence. This was the fulfilment of the wish nearest to her heart. The letters addressed to him when a youth, which have been admitted into this volume, will abundantly show the deep interest she had felt in his success. His nomination as Secretary of State was the crowning mercy of her life. Had she survived the attack of the fever which proved fatal, it is true that she might have seen him exalted still higher, to that station which her husband and his father had held before him; but it is very doubtful whether her satisfaction would have been at all enhanced. The commencement of Mr. Monroe's administration was marked by a unanimity of the popular voice, the more gratifying to her because it was something so new. Later times have only carried us back to party divisions, of the bitterness of which she had during her lifetime tasted too largely to relish even the little of sweet which they might have to give.

The obsequies of Mrs. Adams were attended by a great concourse of people, who voluntarily came to pay this last tribute to her memory. Several brief but beautiful notices of her appeared in the newspapers of the day, and a sermon was preached by the late Reverend Dr. Kirkland, then President of Harvard University, which closed with a delicate and affecting testimony to

her worth. "Ye will seek to mourn, bereaved friends," it says, "as becomes Christians, in a manner worthy of the person you lament. You do, then, bless the Giver of life, that the course of your endeared and honored friend was so long and so bright; that she entered so fully into the spirit of those injunctions which we have explained, and was a minister of blessings to all within her influence. You are soothed to reflect, that she was sensible of the many tokens of divine goodness which marked her lot; that she received the good of her existence with a cheerful and grateful heart; that, when called to weep, she bore adversity with an equal mind; that she used the world as not abusing it to excess, improving well her time, talents, and opportunities, and, though desired longer in this world, was fitted for a better happiness than this world can give."

It often happens, that, when the life of a woman is the topic of discussion, men think it necessary either to fall into a tone of affected gallantry and unmeaning compliment, or to assume the extreme of unnatural and extravagant eulogy. Yet there seems no reason, in the nature of things, why the same laws of composition should not be made to apply to the one sex as to the other. It has been the wish of the Editor to avoid whatever might be considered as

mere empty praise of his subject, in which, if he has not altogether succeeded, some allowance may, it is hoped, be made for the natural bias under which he writes. It has been his purpose to keep far within the line marked out by the great master of composition, who, in allusion to the first instance in Rome when a woman, Popilia, was publicly praised by her son Catulus, defines the topics which may be treated with propriety upon any similar occasion.¹ He does not claim for the letters now published to the world, that they are models of

¹ "Ex his enim fontibus, unde omnia ornate dicendi præcepta sumuntur, licebit etiam laudationem ornare, neque illa elementa desiderare; quæ ut nemo tradat, quis est, qui nesciat, quæ sint in homine laudanda? Positis enim iis rebus, quas Crassus in illius orationis suæ, quam contra collegam censor habuit, principio dixit; 'Quæ naturâ aut fortunâ darentur hominibus, *in iis rebus, se vinci posse animo æquo pati: quæ ipsi sibi homines parare possent, in iis rebus se pati vinci non posse;*' qui laudabit quempiam, intelliget, exponenda sibi esse fortunæ bona. Ea sunt, generis, pecuniæ, propinquorum, amicorum, opum, valetudinis, formæ, virium, ingenii, cæterarumque rerum, quæ sunt aut corporis, aut extraneæ: si habuerit, bene his usum: si non habuerit, sapienter caruisse: si amiserit, moderate tulisse. Deinde, quid sapienter is, quem laudet, quid liberaliter, quid fortiter, quid juste, quid magnifice, quid pie, quid grate, quid humaniter, quid denique cum aliquâ virtute, aut fecerit *aut tulerit.*"—Cicero, *de Oratore*, II. 11.

style, though in behalf of some of them such a claim might, perhaps, be reasonably urged; nor yet that they contain much novel or important historical information. What merit they may have will be found in the pictures of social life which they present, during a period daily becoming more interesting as it recedes from us, and in the high moral and religious tone which uniformly pervades them. They are here given to the public exactly as they were written, with only those corrections or omissions which were absolutely necessary either to perfect the sense, or to avoid subjects exclusively personal. It was the habit of the writer to make first a rough draft of what she intended to say, and from this to form a fair copy for her correspondent; but in the process she altered so much of the original, that, in every instance where the two have been compared, they are by no means the same thing. Only in one or two cases, and for particular reasons, has the loss of the real letter been supplied by the first draft. The principal difference between them ordinarily is, that the former is much the most full. Frequently, it will be seen that she did not copy, the task being, as she testifies in the postscript, extremely irksome to her.

The value attached to her letters by some of her correspondents, even during her lifetime,

was so considerable, that it produced from one of them, the late Judge Vanderkemp of New York, a request that a collection should then be made for publication. In allusion to this, Mrs. Adams writes in a note to a female friend ;

“The President has a letter from Vanderkemp, in which he proposes to have him send a collection of my letters to publish ! A pretty figure I should make. No. No. I have not any ambition to appear in print. Heedless and inaccurate as I am, I have too much vanity to risk my reputation before the public.”

And, on the same day, she replied to Judge Vanderkemp as follows ;

“Quincy, 24 January, 1818.

“MY DEAR SIR,

“WHEN President Monroe was in Boston, upon his late tour, encompassed by citizens, surrounded by the military, harassed by invitations to parties, and applications innumerable for office, some gentleman asked him if he was not completely worn out ? To which he replied, ‘O no. A little flattery will support a man through great fatigue.’ I may apply the observation to myself and say, that the flattery in your letter leads me to break through the aver-

sion, which is daily increasing upon me, to writing.

“You terrify me, my dear Sir, when you ask for letters of mine to publish. It is true, that Dr. Disney, to whom the late Mr. Hollis bequeathed his property, found amongst his papers some letters from the President and from me, which he asked permission to publish. We had both forgotten the contents of them, but left them to his judgment to do with them as he pleased, and accordingly he published some of them. One other letter to my son, when he first went to France in the year 1778, by some means or other, was published in an English Magazine; and those, I believe, are all the mighty works of mine, which ever have, or will, by my consent, appear before the public. *Style* I never studied. My language is

‘Warm from the *heart*, and faithful to its fires,’

the spontaneous effusions of friendship. As such I tender them to Mr. Vanderkemp, sure of his indulgence, since I make no pretensions to the character which he professes to fear, that of a learned lady.”

These observations are strictly true. To learning, in the ordinary sense of that term, Mrs. Adams could make no claim. Her read-

ing had been extensive in the lighter departments of literature, and she was well acquainted with the poets in her own language; but it went no further. It is the soul, shining through the words, that gives to them their great attraction; the spirit, ever equal to the occasion, whether a great or a small one;—a spirit, inquisitive and earnest in the little details of life, as when she was in France and England; playful, when she describes daily duties;¹ but rising to the call, when the roar of cannon is in her ears,²—or when she reproves her husband for not knowing her better than to think her a coward and to fear telling her bad news,³—or when she warns her son, that she “would rather he had found his grave in the ocean, or that any untimely death should crop him in his infant years, than see him an immoral, profligate, or graceless child.”⁴

In conclusion, and in order to avoid the possibility of misconstruction, it is proper to state, that for the selection which has now been made, and for the sentiments expressed by the Editor, he is exclusively responsible. He has consulted with no person in the progress of his duty; hence, if it should be thought

¹ Letter, 19 November, 1812.

² Vol. I. page 107.

³ Vol. I. pages 88-92.

⁴ Vol. I. page 123.

that errors of judgment have been committed, the fault must be held to lie wholly with him. The individuals in whose hands are the letters, from which this compilation has been made, furnished them to him at his request, without limitation or restriction; for which manifestation of their confidence in him, he begs leave thus publicly to express his gratitude. Among those persons, he would make known his obligations particularly to Mrs. John Greenleaf, of Quincy, and Mrs. Felt, of Boston, respectively daughters of the two sisters of Mrs. Adams; Mrs. C. A. De Wint, of Fishkill, New York, the daughter of Mrs. W. S. Smith; and Mrs. and Miss Quincy, of Cambridge. It is hardly necessary to add, that to his father, John Quincy Adams, and to the widow of his uncle, the late Judge Thomas B. Adams, he is indebted for the opportunity of freely examining and using the great mass of papers in their possession. It was the fortune of the Editor to know the subject of his Memoir only during the last year of her life, and when he was too young fully to comprehend the worth of her character; but it will be a source of unceasing gratification to him as long as he lives, that he has been permitted to pay this small tribute, however inadequate, to her memory.

NOTE.—The following letter is the one alluded to in the Note to page lxxiv of this Memoir.

THOMAS JEFFERSON TO JOHN ADAMS.

Monticello, 13 November, 1818.

THE public papers, my dear friend, announce the fatal event of which your letter of October the 20th had given me ominous foreboding. Tried myself in the school of affliction, by the loss of every form of connexion which can rive the human heart, I know well, and feel what you have lost, what you have suffered, are suffering, and have yet to endure. The same trials have taught me, that for ills so immeasurable, time and silence are the only medicine. I will not therefore, by useless condolences, open afresh the sluices of your grief, nor, although mingling sincerely my tears with yours, will I say a word more where words are vain; but that it is of some comfort to us both, that the term is not very distant, at which we are to deposit in the same cerement our sorrows and

suffering bodies, and to ascend in essence to an ecstatic meeting with the friends we have loved and lost, and whom we shall still love and never lose again.

God bless you and support you under your heavy affliction.

TH: JEFFERSON.

LETTERS.

VOL. 1.

1

LETTERS.

TO MRS. H. LINCOLN.¹

Weymouth, 5 October, 1761.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Does not my friend think me a stupid girl, when she has kindly offered to correspond with me, that I should be so senseless as not to accept the offer? Senseless and stupid I would confess myself, and that to the greatest degree, if I did not foresee the many advantages I shall receive from corresponding with a lady of your known prudence and understanding.

I gratefully accept your offer; although I may be charged with vanity in pretending to entertain you with my scrawls; yet I know your generosity is such,

¹ For this letter I have to acknowledge myself indebted to the kindness of Miss E. S. Quincy, a grand-niece of the lady to whom it was addressed. After the death of Dr. Lincoln she was married to Ebenezer Storer, Esq., of Boston, and died only a few years ago.

that, like a kind parent, you will bury in oblivion all my imperfections. I do not aim at entertaining. I write merely for the instruction and edification which I shall receive, provided you honor me with your correspondence.

Your letter I received, and, believe me, it has not been through forgetfulness, that I have not before this time returned you my sincere thanks for the kind assurance you then gave me of continued friendship. You have, I hope, pardoned my suspicions; they arose from love. What persons in their right senses would calmly, and without repining or even inquiring into the cause, submit to lose their greatest temporal good and happiness? for thus the divine, Dr. Young, looks upon a true friend, when he says,

“A friend is worth all hazards we can run.
Poor is the friendless master of a world;
A world in purchase for a friend is gain.”

Who, that has once been favored with your friendship, can be satisfied with the least diminution of it? Not those who value it according to its worth.

You have, like king Ahasuerus, held forth, though not a golden sceptre, yet one more valuable, the sceptre of friendship, if I may so call it. Like Esther, I would draw nigh and touch it. Will you proceed and say, “What wilt thou?” and “What is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of my heart.” Why, no. I think I will not have so dangerous a present, lest your good man should find it out and challenge me; but, if you

please, I'll have a place in one corner of it, a place well guarded and fortified, or still I shall fear being jostled out by him. Now do not deny my request on purpose to make me feel the weight of your observation, "that we are often disappointed when we set our minds upon that which is to yield us great happiness." I know it too well already. Daily experience teaches me that truth.

And now let me ask you, my friend, whether you do not think, that many of our disappointments and much of our unhappiness arise from our forming false notions of things and persons. We strangely impose upon ourselves; we create a fairy land of happiness. Fancy is fruitful and promises fair, but, like the dog in the fable, we catch at a shadow, and when we find the disappointment, we are vexed, not with ourselves, who are really the impostors, but with the poor, innocent thing or person of whom we have formed such strange ideas. When this is the case, I believe we always find, that we have enjoyed more pleasure in the anticipation than in the real enjoyment of our wishes.

Dr. Young says, "Our wishes give us not our wishes." Some disappointments are, indeed, more grievous than others. Since they are our lot, let us bear them with patience. That person, that cannot bear a disappointment, must not live in a world so changeable as this, and 't is wise it should be so; for, were we to enjoy a continual prosperity, we should be too firmly attached to the world ever to think of quitting it, and there would be room to fear, that we

should be so far intoxicated with prosperity as to swim smoothly from joy to joy, along life's short current, wholly unmindful of the vast ocean, Eternity.

If I did not know that it would be adding to the length of my letter, I might make some excuse for it; but that and another reason will hinder me.

You bid me tell *one* of my sparks (I think that was the word) to bring me to see you. Why! I believe you think they are as plenty as herrings, when, alas! there is as great a scarcity of them as there is of justice, honesty, prudence, and many other virtues. I've no pretensions to one. Wealth, wealth is the only thing that is looked after now. 'T is said Plato thought, if Virtue would appear to the world, all mankind would be enamoured with her, but now interest governs the world and men neglect the golden mean.

But, to be sober, I should really rejoice to come and see you, but if I wait till I get a (what did you call 'em?) I fear you 'll be blind with age.

I can say, in the length of this epistle, I've made the golden rule mine. Pray, my friend, do not let it be long before you write to your ever affectionate

A. S.

P. S. My regards to your good man. I've no acquaintance with him, but if you love him, I do, and should be glad to see him.

TO JOHN ADAMS.¹

Weymouth, 16 April, 1764.

MY FRIEND,

I THINK I write to you every day. Shall not I make my letters very cheap? Don't you light your pipe with them? I care not if you do. 'T is a pleasure to me to write. Yet I wonder I write to you with so little restraint, for as a critic I fear you more than any other person on earth, and 't is the only character in which I ever did or ever will fear you. What say you? Do you approve of that speech? Don't you think me a courageous being? Courage is a laudable, a glorious virtue in your sex, why not in mine? For my part, I think you ought to applaud me for mine.

*Exit Rattle.**Solus* your Diana.

And now, pray tell me, how you do? Do you feel any venom working in your veins? Did you ever before experience such a feeling? (This letter will be made up with questions, I fancy, not set in order before you, neither.) How do you employ yourself? Do you go abroad yet? Is it not cruel to bestow those favors upon others, which I should rejoice to receive, yet must be deprived of?

¹ Mr. Adams was in Boston, undergoing the process, then in vogue, of inoculation with the smallpox.

I have lately been thinking whether my mamma — when I write again I will tell you something. Did not you receive a letter to-day by Hannes ?

This is a right girl's letter, — but I will turn to the other side and be sober, if I can.

But what is bred in the bone will never be out of the flesh, (as Lord M. would have said.)

As I have a good opportunity to send some milk, I have not waited for your *orders*, lest, if I should miss this, I should not catch such another. If you want more balm, I can supply you.

Adieu ; — evermore remember me with the tenderest affection, which is also borne unto you by your

A. SMITH.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Thursday Eve. Weymouth, 19 April, 1764.

WHY, my good man, thou hast the curiosity of a girl. Who could have believed, that only a slight hint would have set thy imagination agog in such a manner. And a fine encouragement I have to unravel the mystery as thou callest it. Nothing less, truly, than to be told something to my disadvantage. What an excellent reward that will be ! In what court of justice didst thou learn that equity ? I thank thee, friend ; such knowledge as that is easy enough to be obtained without paying for it. As to the insinua-

tion, it doth not give me any uneasiness ; for, if it is any thing very bad, I know thou dost not believe it. I am not conscious of any harm that I have done or wished to any mortal. I bear no malice to any being. To my enemies, if any I have, I am willing to afford assistance ; therefore towards man I maintain a conscience void of offence.

Yet by this I mean not that I am faultless. But tell me what is the reason, that persons would rather acknowledge themselves guilty than be accused by others ? Is it because they are more tender of themselves, or because they meet with more favor from others when they ingenuously confess ? Let that be as it will, there is something which makes it more agreeable to condemn ourselves than to be condemned by others.

But, although it is vastly disagreeable to be accused of faults, yet no person ought to be offended when such accusations are delivered in the spirit of friendship. I now call upon you to fulfil your promise, and tell me all my faults both of omission and commission, and all the evil you either know or think of me. Be to me a second conscience, nor put me off to a more convenient season. There can be no time more proper than the present. It will be harder to erase them when habit has strengthened and confirmed them. Do not think I trifle. These are really meant as words of truth and soberness, For the present, good night.

Friday Morning, April 20th.

What does it signify? Why may not I visit you days as well as nights? I no sooner close my eyes, than some invisible being, swift as the Alborack of Mahomet, bears me to you,—I see you, but cannot make myself visible to you. That tortures me, but it is still worse when I do not come, for I am then haunted by half a dozen ugly sprites. One will catch me and leap into the sea; another will carry me up a precipice like that which Edgar describes in *Lear*, then toss me down, and, were I not then light as the gossamer, I should shiver into atoms; another will be pouring down my throat stuff worse than the witches' broth in *Macbeth*. Where I shall be carried next I know not, but I would rather have the smallpox by inoculation half a dozen times than be sprited about as I am. What say you? Can you give me any encouragement to come? By the time you receive this I hope from experience you will be able to say, that the distemper is but a trifle. Think you I would not endure a trifle for the pleasure of seeing you? Yes, were it ten times that trifle, I would. But my own inclinations must not be followed,—to duty I sacrifice them. Yet, O my mamma, forgive me if I say, you have forgot or never knew—but hush, and do you excuse me that something I promised you, since it was a speech more undutiful than that which I just now stopped myself in. For the present, good bye.

Friday Evening.

I hope you smoke your letters well, before you deliver them. Mamma is so fearful lest I should catch the distemper, that she hardly ever thinks the letters are sufficiently purified. Did you never rob a bird's nest? Do you remember how the poor bird would fly round and round, fearful to come nigh, yet not know how to leave the place? Just so they say I hover round Tom, whilst he is smoking my letters.

But heyday, Mr. What's your name, who taught you to threaten so vehemently? "A character besides that of a critic, in which if I never did, I always hereafter shall fear you." Thou canst not prove a villain, impossible, — I, therefore, still insist upon it, that I neither do nor can fear thee. For my part, I know not that there is any pleasure in being feared; but, if there is, I hope you will be so generous as to fear your Diana, that she may at least be made sensible of the pleasure. Mr. Ayers will bring you this letter and the *bag*. Do not repine, — it is filled with balm.

Here is love, respects, regards, good wishes — a whole wagon load of them, sent you from all the good folks in the neighbourhood.

To-morrow makes the fourteenth day. How many more are to come? I dare not trust myself with the thought. Adieu. Let me hear from you by Mr. Ayers, and excuse this very bad writing; if you had mended my pen it would have been better. Once more, adieu. Gold and silver have I none,

but such as I have give I unto thee, — which is the affectionate regard of your

A. S.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Weymouth, Sunday Evening, 14 September, 1767.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

THE Doctor talks of setting out to-morrow for New Braintree. I did not know but that he might chance to see you in his way there. I know from the tender affection you bear me and our little ones, that you will rejoice to hear that we are well. Our son is much better than when you left home, and our daughter rocks him to sleep with the song of "Come, papa, come home to brother Johnny." Sunday seems a more lonely day to me than any other when you are absent ; for, though I may be compared to those climates which are deprived of the sun half the year, yet upon a Sunday you commonly afforded us your benign influence. I am now at Weymouth, my father brought me here last night ; to-morrow I return home, where I hope soon to receive the dearest of friends, and the tenderest of husbands, with that unabated affection which has for years past, and will whilst the vital spark lasts, burn in the bosom of your affectionate

A. ADAMS.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 19 August, 1774.

THE great distance between us makes the time appear very long to me. It seems already a month since you left me. The great anxiety I feel for my country, for you, and for our family, renders the day tedious, and the night unpleasant. The rocks and quicksands appear upon every side. What course you can or will take is all wrapped in the bosom of futurity. Uncertainty and expectation leave the mind great scope. Did ever any kingdom or state regain its liberty, when once it was invaded, without bloodshed? I cannot think of it without horror. Yet we are told, that all the misfortunes of Sparta were occasioned by their too great solicitude for present tranquillity, and, from an excessive love of peace, they neglected the means of making it sure and lasting. They ought to have reflected, says Polybius, that, "as there is nothing more desirable or advantageous than peace, when founded in justice and honor, so there is nothing more shameful, and at the same time more pernicious, when attained by bad measures, and purchased at the price of liberty." I have received a most charming letter from our friend Mrs. Warren.¹ She desires me to tell you

¹ Mrs. Mercy Warren, the wife of General James Warren, of Plymouth, and the sister of James Otis,

that her best wishes attend you through your journey, both as a friend and a patriot, — hopes you will have no uncommon difficulties to surmount, or hostile movements to impede you, — but, if the Locrians should interrupt you, she hopes that you will beware, that no future annals may say you chose an ambitious Philip for your leader, who subverted the noble order of the American Amphictyons, and built up a monarchy on the ruins of the happy institution.

I have taken a very great fondness for reading Rollin's Ancient History since you left me. I am determined to go through with it, if possible, in these my days of solitude. I find great pleasure and entertainment from it, and I have persuaded Johnny to read me a page or two every day, and hope he will, from his desire to oblige me, entertain a fondness for it. We have had a charming rain, which lasted twelve hours, and has greatly revived the dying fruits of the earth.

I want much to hear from you. I long impatiently to have you upon the stage of action. The first of September, or the month of September, perhaps, may be of as much importance to Great Britain, as the Ides of March were to Cæsar. I wish you every public, as well as private blessing, and that wisdom which is profitable both for instruction and edification, to conduct you in this difficult day. The little flock remember papa, and kindly wish to see him; so does your most affectionate

ABIGAIL ADAMS.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 2 September, 1774.

I AM very impatient to receive a letter from you. You indulged me so much in that way in your last absence, that I now think I have a right to hear as often from you, as you have leisure and opportunity to write. I hear that Mr. Adams¹ wrote to his son, and the Speaker¹ to his lady ; but perhaps you did not know of the opportunity. I suppose you have before this time received two letters from me, and will write me by the same conveyance. I judge you reached Philadelphia last Saturday night. I cannot but felicitate you upon your absence a little while from this scene of perturbation, anxiety, and distress. I own I feel not a little agitated with the accounts I have this day received from town ; great commotions have arisen in consequence of a discovery of a traitorous plot of Colonel Brattle's, — his advice to Gage, to break every commissioned officer, and to seize the province's and town's stock of gunpowder. This has so enraged and exasperated the people, that there is great apprehension of an immediate rupture. They have been all in flames ever since the new-fangled counsellors have taken their oaths. The importance, of which they consider the meet-

¹ Mr. Samuel Adams. Mr. Cushing had been the Speaker of the House of Representatives in Massachusetts until chosen a delegate to the Congress.

ing of the Congress, and the result thereof to the community, withholds the arm of vengeance already lifted, which would most certainly fall with accumulated wrath upon Brattle, were it possible to come at him ; — but no sooner did he discover that his treachery had taken air, than he fled, not only to Boston, but into the camp, for safety. You will, by Mr. Tudor, no doubt have a much more accurate account than I am able to give you ; but one thing I can inform you of, which perhaps you may not have heard, namely, Mr. Vinton, our Sheriff, it seems, received one of those twenty warrants,¹ which were issued by Messrs. Goldthwait and Price, which has cost them such bitter repentance and humble acknowledgments, and which has revealed the great secret of their attachment to the liberties of their country, and their veneration and regard for the good will of their countrymen. See their address to Hutchinson and Gage. This warrant, which was for Stoughtonham,² Vinton carried and delivered to a constable there ; but, before he had got six miles, he was overtaken by sixty men on horseback, who surrounded him, and told him, unless he returned with them and demanded back that warrant and committed it to the flames before their faces, he must take the conse-

¹ These were warrants issued by the clerks of the court by which the juries were summoned.

² Now Sharon. The history of the events alluded to in this letter, may be found more at large in Gordon's "History of the American War," Vol. I. pp. 386, 387.

quences of a refusal ; and he, not thinking it best to endure their vengeance, returned with them, made his demand of the warrant, and consumed it, upon which they dispersed and left him to his own reflections. Since the news of the Quebec bill arrived, all the Church people here have hung their heads, and will not converse upon politics, though ever so much provoked by the opposite party. Before that, parties ran very high, and very hard words and threats of blows upon both sides were given out. They have had their town meeting here, which was full as usual, chose their committee for the county meeting, and did business without once regarding or fearing for the consequences.

I should be glad to know how you found the people as you travelled from town to town. I hear you met with great hospitality and kindness in Connecticut. Pray let me know how your health is, and whether you have not had exceeding hot weather. The drought has been very severe. My poor cows will certainly prefer a petition to you, setting forth their grievances, and informing you that they have been deprived of their ancient privileges, whereby they are become great sufferers, and desiring that they may be restored to them. More especially, as their living, by reason of the drought, is all taken from them, and their property which they hold elsewhere is decaying, they humbly pray that you would consider them, lest hunger should break through stone walls.

The tenderest regard evermore awaits you from
your most affectionate

ABIGAIL ADAMS.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 14 September, 1774.

DEAREST FRIEND,

FIVE weeks have passed and not one line have I received. I would rather give a dollar for a letter by the post, though the consequence should be, that I ate but one meal a day these three weeks to come. Every one I see is inquiring after you. — When did I hear? — All my intelligence is collected from the newspaper, and I can only reply that I saw by that, you arrived such a day. I know your fondness for writing, and your inclination to let me hear from you by the first safe conveyance, which makes me suspect that some letter or other has miscarried, — but I hope, now you have arrived at Philadelphia, you will find means to convey me some intelligence. We are all well here. I think I enjoy better health than I have done these two years. I have not been to town since I parted with you there. The Governor is making all kinds of warlike preparations, such as mounting cannon upon Beacon Hill, digging intrenchments upon the Neck, placing cannon there, encamping a regiment there, throwing up breast-works, &c. The people are much alarmed; and the

selectmen have waited upon him in consequence of it. The County Congress have also sent a committee ; all which proceedings you will have a more particular account of, than I am able to give you, from the public papers. But, as to the movements of this town, perhaps you may not hear them from any other person.

In consequence of the powder being taken from Charlestown, a general alarm spread through many towns and was caught pretty soon here. The report took here on Friday, and on Sunday a soldier was seen lurking about the Common, supposed to be a spy, but most likely a deserter. However, intelligence of it was communicated to the other parishes, and about eight o'clock, Sunday evening, there passed by here about two hundred men, preceded by a horsecart, and marched down to the powder house, from whence they took the powder, and carried it into the other parish and there secreted it. I opened the window upon their return. They passed without any noise, not a word among them till they came against this house, when some of them perceiving me, asked me if I wanted any powder. I replied, No, since it was in so good hands. — The reason they gave for taking it was, that we had so many Tories here, they dared not trust us with it ; they had taken Vinton in their train, and upon their return they stopped between Cleverly's and Etter's and called upon him to deliver two warrants.¹ Upon his

¹ For summoning juries.

producing them, they put it to vote whether they should burn them, and it passed in the affirmative. They then made a circle and burnt them. They then called a vote whether they should huzza, but, it being Sunday evening, it passed in the negative. They called upon Vinton to swear, that he would never be instrumental in carrying into execution any of these new acts. They were not satisfied with his answers; however, they let him rest. A few days afterwards, upon his making some foolish speeches, they assembled to the amount of two or three hundred, and swore vengeance upon him unless he took a solemn oath. Accordingly, they chose a committee and sent it with him to Major Miller's to see that he complied; and they waited his return, which proving satisfactory, they dispersed. This town appears as high as you can well imagine, and, if necessary, would soon be in arms. Not a Tory but hides his head. The Church parson thought they were coming after him, and ran up garret; they say another jumped out of his window and hid among the corn, whilst a third crept under his board fence and told his beads.

16 September, 1774.

I dined to-day at Colonel Quincy's. They were so kind as to send me and Abby and Betsey an invitation to spend the day with them; and, as I had not been to see them since I removed to Braintree, I accepted the invitation. After I got there came Mr. Samuel Quincy's wife and Mr. Sumner, Mr. Josiah

and wife.¹ A little clashing of parties, you may be sure. Mr. Sam's wife said, she thought it high time for her husband to turn about ; he had not done half so cleverly since he left her advice ; said they both greatly admired the most excellent speech of the Bishop of St. Asaph, which I suppose you have seen. It meets, and most certainly merits, the greatest encomiums.

Upon my return at night, Mr. Thaxter met me at the door with your letter, dated at Princeton, New Jersey. It really gave me such a flow of spirits, that I was not composed enough to sleep until one o'clock. You make no mention of one I wrote you previous to that you received by Mr. Breck, and sent by Mr. Cunningham. I am rejoiced to hear you are well. I want to know many more particulars than you write me, and hope soon to hear from you again. I dare not trust myself with the thought how long you may perhaps be absent. I only count the weeks already past and they amount to five. I am not so lonely as I should have been without my two neighbours ; we make a table-full at meal times. All the rest of their time they spend in the office. Never were two persons who gave a family less trouble than they do. It is at last determined, that Mr. Rice keep the school here. Indeed, he has kept ever since he has been here, but not with any expectation that he should be continued ; — but the people, finding no small difference between him and his

¹ It is well known, that these two brothers took opposite sides in the struggle that ensued.

predecessor, chose he should be continued. I have not sent Johnny.¹ He goes very steadily to Mr. Thaxter, who I believe takes very good care of him ; and, as they seem to have a liking to each other, I believe it will be best to continue him with him. However, when you return, we can consult what will be best. I am certain that, if he does not get so much good, he gets less harm ; and I have always thought it of very great importance, that children should, in the early part of life, be unaccustomed to such examples as would tend to corrupt the purity of their words and actions, that they may chill with horror at the sound of an oath, and blush with indignation at an obscene expression. These first principles, which grow with their growth, and strengthen with their strength, neither time nor custom can totally eradicate. You will perhaps be tired. No.—Let it serve by way of relaxation from the more important concerns of the day, and be such an amusement, as your little hermitage used to afford you here. You have before you, to express myself in the words of the Bishop, the greatest national concerns that ever came before any people ; and, if the prayers and petitions ascend unto Heaven, which are daily offered for you, wisdom will flow down as a stream, and righteousness as the mighty waters, and your deliberations will make glad the cities of our God.

I was very sorry I did not know of Mr. Cary's

¹ Her son, John Quincy Adams.

going ; it would have been so good an opportunity to have sent this, as I lament the loss of. You have heard, no doubt, of the people's preventing the court from sitting in various counties ; and last week, in Taunton, Angier urged the court's opening, and calling out the actions, but could not effect it. I saw a letter from Miss Eunice, wherein she gives an account of it, and says there were two thousand men assembled round the court-house, and, by a committee of nine, presented a petition requesting that they would not sit, and with the utmost order waited two hours for their answer, when they dispersed.

You will burn all these letters, lest they should fall from your pocket, and thus expose your most affectionate friend,

ABIGAIL ADAMS.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Boston Garrison, 22 September, 1774.

I HAVE just returned from a visit to my brother with my father, who carried me there the day before yesterday, and called here on my return, to see this much injured town. I view it with much the same sensations that I should the body of a departed friend ; — as having only put off its present glory, to rise finally to a more happy state. I will not despair, but will believe, that, our cause being good, we shall finally prevail. The maxim, “ In time of peace pre-

pare for war," (if this may be called a time of peace,) resounds throughout the country. Next Tuesday they are warned at Braintree, all above fifteen and under sixty, to attend with their arms; and to train once a fortnight from that time is a scheme which lies much at heart with many.

Scott has arrived, and brings news that he expected to find all peace and quietness here, as he left them at home. You will have more particulars than I am able to send you, from much better hands. There has been in town a conspiracy of the negroes. At present it is kept pretty private, and was discovered by one who endeavoured to dissuade them from it. He being threatened with his life, applied to Justice Quincy for protection. They conducted in this way, got an Irishman to draw up a petition to the Governor, telling him they would fight for him provided he would arm them, and engage to liberate them if he conquered. And it is said that he attended so much to it, as to consult Percy upon it, and one Lieutenant Small has been very busy and active. There is but little said, and what steps they will take in consequence of it I know not. I wish most sincerely there was not a slave in the province; it always appeared a most iniquitous scheme to me to fight ourselves for what we are daily robbing and plundering from those who have as good a right to freedom as we have. You know my mind upon this subject.

I left all our little ones well, and shall return to them to-night. I hope to hear from you by the re-

turn of the bearer of this, and by Revere. I long for the day of your return, yet look upon you as much safer where you are, but know it will not do for you ; — not one action has been brought to this court, — no business of any sort in your way, — all law ceases, and the gospel will soon follow ; for they are supporters of each other. Adieu, my father hurries me.

Yours most sincerely,

ABIGAIL ADAMS.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 16 October, 1774.

MY MUCH LOVED FRIEND,

I DARE not express to you, at three hundred miles' distance, how ardently I long for your return. I have some very miserly wishes, and cannot consent to your spending one hour in town, till, at least, I have had you twelve. The idea plays about my heart, unnerves my hand, whilst I write, — awakens all the tender sentiments, that years have increased and matured, and which, when with me, were every day dispensing to you. The whole collected stock of ten weeks' absence knows not how to brook any longer restraint, but will break forth and flow through my pen. May the like sensations enter thy breast, and (spite of all the weighty cares of state) mingle themselves with those I wish to communicate ; for, in

giving them utterance, I have felt more sincere pleasure, than I have known since the 10th of August.¹ Many have been the anxious hours I have spent since that day ; the threatening aspect of our public affairs, the complicated distress of this province, the arduous and perplexed business in which you are engaged, have all conspired to agitate my bosom with fears and apprehensions to which I have heretofore been a stranger ; and, far from thinking the scene closed, it looks as though the curtain was but just drawn, and only the first scene of the infernal plot disclosed ; and whether the end will be tragical, Heaven alone knows. You cannot be, I know, nor do I wish to see you, an inactive spectator ; but, if the sword be drawn, I bid adieu to all domestic felicity, and look forward to that country, where there are neither wars nor rumors of war, in a firm belief, that, through the mercy of its King, we shall both rejoice there together.

I greatly fear, that the arm of treachery and violence is lifted over us, as a scourge and heavy punishment from Heaven for our numerous offences, and for the misimprovement of our great advantages. If we expect to inherit the blessings of our fathers, we should return a little more to their primitive simplicity of manners, and not sink into inglorious ease. We have too many high-sounding words, and too few actions that correspond with them. I have spent one Sabbath in town since you left. I saw no differ-

¹ The day on which he left her.

ence in respect to ornament, &c. ; but in the country you must look for that virtue, of which you find but small glimmerings in the metropolis. Indeed, they have not the advantages, nor the resolution, to encourage our own manufactories, which people in the country have. To the mercantile part, it is considered as throwing away their own bread ; but they must retrench their expenses, and be content with a small share of gain, for they will find but few who will wear their livery. As for me, I will seek wool and flax, and work willingly with my hands ; and, indeed, there is occasion for all our industry and economy. You mention the removal of our books, &c., from Boston ; I believe they are safe there, and it would incommode the gentlemen to remove them, as they would not then have a place to repair to for study. I suppose they would not choose to be at the expense of boarding out. Mr. Williams, I believe, keeps pretty much with his mother. Mr. Hill's father had some thoughts of removing up to Braintree, provided he could be accommodated with a house, which he finds very difficult.

Mr. Cranch's last determination was to tarry in town, unless any thing new takes place. His friends in town oppose his removal so much, that he is determined to stay. The opinion you have entertained of General Gage is, I believe, just. Indeed, he professes to act only upon the defensive. The people in the country begin to be very anxious for the Congress to rise ; they have no idea of the weighty business you have to transact, and their blood boils

with indignation at the hostile preparations they are constant witnesses of. Mr. Quincy's so secret departure is matter of various speculation ; some say he is deputed by the Congress, others, that he is gone to Holland, and the Tories say he is gone to be hanged.¹

I rejoice at the favorable account you give me of your health. May it be continued to you. My health is much better than it was last fall ; some folks say I grow very fat. I venture to write almost any thing in this letter, because I know the care of the bearer. He will be most sadly disappointed, if you should be broken up before he arrives ; as he is very desirous of being introduced by you to a number of gentlemen of respectable character. I almost envy him, that he should see you before I can. Mr. Thaxter and Mr. Rice present their regards to you. Uncle Quincy, too, sends his love to you. He is very good to call and see me, and so have many other of my friends been. Colonel Warren and lady were here on Monday, and send their love to you. The Colonel promised to write. Mrs. Warren will spend a day or two, on her return, with me. I told Betsey² to write to you ; she says she would, if you were her husband.

Your mother sends her love to you ; and all your family, too numerous to name, desire to be remem-

¹ See the "Memoir of the Life of Josiah Quincy, Jr.," by his son, Josiah Quincy, p. 182.

² Mrs. Adams's sister ; who was afterwards married to the Rev. John Shaw, and to whom several of the letters in this volume were addressed.

bered. You will receive letters from two, who are as earnest to write to papa, as if the welfare of a kingdom depended upon it. If you can give any guess, within a month, let me know when you think of returning.

Your most affectionate

ABIGAIL ADAMS.

TO JOHN ADAMS.¹

Braintree, 4 May, 1775.

I HAVE but little news to write you. Every thing of that kind you will learn by a more accurate hand than mine. Things remain in much the same situation here, that they were when you went away. There has been no descent upon the seacoast. Guards are regularly kept; and people seem more settled, and are returning to their husbandry. I feel somewhat lonely. Mr. Thaxter is gone home. Mr. Rice is going into the army, as captain of a company. We have no school. I know not what to do with John. As government is assumed, I suppose courts of justice will be established, and in that case, there may be business to do. If so, would it not be best for Mr. Thaxter to return? They seem to be discouraged in the study of law, and think there

¹ Mr. Adams was at home during the interval between the sessions of Congress, marked by the dates of this and the preceding letter.

never will be any business for them. I could have wished they had consulted you upon the subject, before you went away.

I suppose you will receive two or three volumes of that forlorn wretch Hutchinson's letters. Among many other things, I hear he wrote, in 1772, that Deacon Phillips and you had like to have been chosen into the Council, but, if you had, you should have shared the same fate with Bowers.¹ May the fate of Mordecai be his. There is nobody admitted into town yet. I have made two or three attempts to get somebody in, but cannot succeed ; so have not been able to do the business you left in charge with me. I want very much to hear from you, how you stood your journey, and in what state you find yourself now. I felt very anxious about you ; though I endeavoured to be very insensible and heroic, yet my heart felt like a heart of lead. The same night you left me, I heard of Mr. Quincy's death, which, at this time, was a most melancholy event ; especially, as he wrote in minutes, which he left behind, that he had matters of consequence intrusted with him, which, for want of a confidant, must die with him.² I went to see his distressed widow last Saturday, at the Colonel's ; and, in the afternoon, from an alarm they had, she and her sister, with three others of the family, took refuge with me and tarried all night. She desired me to present her regards to you, and let

¹ That is, would have received his negative.

² See "Memoir of Josiah Quincy, Jr." p. 345.

you know, she wished you every blessing, — should always esteem you, as a sincere friend of her deceased husband. Poor afflicted woman ; my heart was wounded for her. I must quit the subject, and entreat you to write me by every opportunity.

Yours,

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 7 May, 1775.

I RECEIVED by the Deacon two letters from you, this day, from Hartford. I feel a recruit of spirits upon the reception of them, and the comfortable news which they contain. We had not heard any thing from North Carolina before, and could not help feeling anxious, lest we should find a defection there, arising more from their ancient feuds and animosities, than from any settled ill-will in the present contest ; but the confirmation of the choice of their delegates by their Assembly, leaves not a doubt of their firmness ; nor doth the eye say unto the hand, " I have no need of thee." The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance. Great events are most certainly in the womb of futurity ; and, if the present chastisements which we experience have a proper influence upon our conduct, the event will certainly be in our favor. The distresses of the inhabitants of Boston are beyond the power of

language to describe ; there are but very few who are permitted to come out in a day ; they delay giving passes, make them wait from hour to hour, and their counsels are not two hours together alike. One day, they shall come out with their effects ; the next day, merchandise is not effects. One day, their household furniture is to come out ; the next, only wearing apparel ; the next, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, and he refuseth to hearken to them, and will not let the people go. May their deliverance be wrought out for them, as it was for the children of Israel. I do not mean by miracles, but by the interposition of Heaven in their favor. They have taken a list of all those who they suppose were concerned in watching the tea, and every other person whom they call obnoxious, and they and their effects are to suffer destruction.

Yours,

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 24 May, 1775.

I SUPPOSE you have had a formidable account of the alarm we had last Sunday morning. When I rose, about six o'clock, I was told, that the drums had been some time beating, and that three alarm guns were fired ; that Weymouth bell had been ringing, and Mr. Weld's was then ringing. I immediately sent off an express to know the occasion, and found the

whole town in confusion. Three sloops and one cutter had come out and dropped anchor just below Great Hill. It was difficult to tell their designs; some supposed they were coming to Germantown, others, to Weymouth; people, women, children, from the iron-works, came flocking down this way; every woman and child driven off from below my father's; my father's family flying. The Doctor¹ is in great distress, as you may well imagine, for my aunt had her bed thrown into a cart into which she got herself, and ordered the boy to drive her to Bridgewater, which he did. The report was to them, that three hundred had landed, and were upon their march up into town. The alarm flew like lightning, and men from all parts came flocking down, till two thousand were collected. But, it seems, their expedition was to Grape Island for Levett's hay. There it was impossible to reach them, for want of boats; but the sight of so many persons, and the firing at them, prevented their getting more than three tons of hay, though they had carted much more down to the water. At last a lighter was mustered, and a sloop from Hingham, which had six port holes. Our men eagerly jumped on board, and put off for the island. As soon as they perceived it, they decamped. Our people landed upon the island, and in an instant set fire to the hay, which, with the barn, was soon con-

¹ Dr. Cotton Tufts, of Weymouth, well known for many years, as a leading man in the County of Norfolk, had married a daughter of Colonel John Quincy's, and, therefore, a sister of Mrs. Adams's mother.

sumed ;—about eighty tons, it is said. We expect soon to be in continual alarms, till something decisive takes place. We wait, with longing expectation, in hopes to hear the best accounts from you, with regard to union and harmony, &c. We rejoice greatly on the arrival of Dr. Franklin, as he must certainly be able to inform you very particularly of the situation of affairs in England. I wish you would, if you can get time, be as particular as you *may*, when you write. Every one hereabouts comes to me, to hear what accounts I have. I was so unlucky, as not to get the letter you wrote at New York. Captain Beale forgot it, and left it behind. We have a flying report here, with regard to New York, but cannot give any credit to it, as yet, that they had been engaged with the ships, which Gage sent there, and had taken them, with great loss upon both sides.

Yesterday we had an account of three ships coming into Boston. I believe it is true, as there was a salute from the other ships, though I have not been able to learn from whence they come. I suppose you have had an account of the fire, which did much damage to the warehouses, and added greatly to the distresses of the inhabitants, whilst it continued. The bad conduct of General Gage¹ was the means of its doing so much damage.

Our house has been, upon this alarm, in the same

¹ He had taken the engines under guard, in consequence of a report, that the liberty party intended to fire the town. See "The Remembrancer," for 1775, pp. 95, 98.

scene of confusion, that it was upon the former. Soldiers coming in for a lodging, for breakfast, for supper, for drink, &c. Sometimes refugees from Boston, tired and fatigued, seek an asylum for a day, a night, a week. You can hardly imagine how we live ; yet,

“To the houseless child of want
Our doors are open still ;
And, though our portions are but scant,
We give them with good will.”

My best wishes attend you, both for your health and happiness, and that you may be directed into the wisest and best measures for our safety, and the security of our posterity. I wish you were nearer to us ; we know not what a day will bring forth, nor what distress one hour may throw us into. Hitherto I have been able to maintain a calmness and presence of mind, and hope I shall, let the exigency of the time be what it will. Adieu, breakfast calls.

Your affectionate

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Weymouth, 15 June, 1775.

I SAT down to write to you on Monday, but really could not compose myself sufficiently ; the anxiety I

suffered from not hearing one syllable from you for more than five weeks, and the new distress arising from the arrival of recruits, agitated me more than I have been since the never-to-be-forgotten 14th of April.¹ I have been much revived by receiving two letters from you last night; one by the servant of your friend, and the other by the gentleman you mention, though they both went to Cambridge, and I have not seen them. I hope to send this, as a return to you.

I feared much for your health, when you went away. I must entreat you to be as careful as you can consistently with the duty you owe your country. That consideration, alone, prevailed with me to consent to your departure, in a time so perilous and so hazardous to your family, and with a body so infirm as to require the tenderest care and nursing. I wish you may be supported and divinely assisted in this most important crisis, when the fate of empires depends upon your wisdom and conduct. I greatly rejoice to hear of your union and determination to stand by us.

We cannot but consider the great distance you are from us as a very great misfortune, when our critical situation renders it necessary to hear from you every week, and will be more and more so, as difficulties arise. We now expect our seacoast ravaged; perhaps the very next letter I write will inform you, that I am driven away from our yet quiet cot-

¹ The day upon which he left her.

tage. Necessity will oblige Gage to take some desperate steps. We are told for truth, that he is now eight thousand strong. We live in continual expectation of alarms. Courage, I know we have in abundance, — conduct, I hope we shall not want; but powder, — where shall we get a sufficient supply? I wish we may not fail there. Every town is filled with the distressed inhabitants of Boston. Our house among others is deserted, and by this time, like enough, made use of as a barrack. Mr. Bowdoin and his lady are at present in the house of Mrs. Borland, and are going to Middleborough, to the house of Judge Oliver. He, poor gentleman, is so low, that I apprehend he is hastening to a house not made with hands; he looks like a mere skeleton, speaks faint and low, is racked with a violent cough, and, I think, far advanced in a consumption. I went to see him last Saturday. He is very inquisitive of every person with regard to the times; begged I would let him know of the first intelligence I had from you; is very unable to converse by reason of his cough. He rides every pleasant day, and has been kind enough to call at the door (though unable to get out) several times. He says the very name of Hutchinson distresses him. Speaking of him, the other day, he broke out, — “Religious rascal! how I abhor his name.”

Pray be as particular as possible when you write. Everybody wants to hear and to know what is doing, and what may be communicated do not fail to inform me of. All our friends desire to be kindly

remembered to you. Gage's proclamation you will receive by this conveyance. All the records of time cannot produce a blacker page. Satan, when driven from the regions of bliss, exhibited not more malice. Surely the father of lies is superseded. Yet we think it the best proclamation he could have issued.

I shall, whenever I can, receive and entertain, in the best manner I am capable, the gentlemen who have so generously proffered their services in our army. Government is wanted in the army and elsewhere. We see the want of it more from so large a body being together, than when each individual was employed in his own domestic circle. My best regards attend every man you esteem. You will make my compliments to Mr. Mifflin and lady. I do not now wonder at the regard the ladies express for a soldier. Every man who wears a cockade appears of double the importance he used to do, and I feel a respect for the lowest subaltern in the army. You tell me you know not when you shall see me. I never trust myself long with the terrors which sometimes intrude themselves upon me.

I hope we shall see each other again, and rejoice together in happier days; the little ones are well, and send duty to papa. Don't fail of letting me hear from you by every opportunity. Every line is like a precious relic of the saints.

I have a request to make of you; something like the barrel of sand, I suppose you will think it, but really of much more importance to me. It is, that

you would send out Mr. Bass,¹ and purchase me a bundle of pins, and put them in your trunk for me. The cry for pins is so great, that what I used to buy for seven shillings and sixpence, are now twenty shillings, and not to be had for that. A bundle contains six thousand, for which I used to give a dollar ; but if you can procure them for fifty shillings, or three pounds,² pray let me have them.

I am, with the tenderest regard,

Your

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Sunday, 18 June, 1775.

DEAREST FRIEND,

THE day, — perhaps, the decisive day, — is come, on which the fate of America depends. My bursting heart must find vent at my pen. I have just heard, that our dear friend, Dr. Warren, is no more, but fell gloriously fighting for his country ; saying, better to die honorably in the field, than ignominiously hang upon the gallows. Great is our loss. He has distinguished himself in every engagement, by his courage and fortitude, by animating the soldiers, and

¹ A man who accompanied Mr. Adams in the capacity of a servant.

² This price must have been caused by the obstruction of trade, as there had been no emission of paper money of importance.

leading them on by his own example. A particular account of these dreadful, but I hope glorious days will be transmitted you, no doubt, in the exactest manner.

“The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; but the God of Israel is he, that giveth strength and power unto his people. Trust in him at all times, ye people, pour out your hearts before him; God is a refuge for us.” Charlestown is laid in ashes. The battle began upon our intrenchments upon Bunker’s Hill, Saturday morning about three o’clock, and has not ceased yet, and it is now three o’clock Sabbath afternoon.

It is expected they will come out over the Neck to-night, and a dreadful battle must ensue. Almighty God, cover the heads of our countrymen, and be a shield to our dear friends! How many have fallen, we know not. The constant roar of the cannon is so distressing, that we cannot eat, drink, or sleep. May we be supported and sustained in the dreadful conflict. I shall tarry here till it is thought unsafe by my friends, and then I have secured myself a retreat at your brother’s, who has kindly offered me part of his house. I cannot compose myself to write any further at present. I will add more as I hear further.

Tuesday Afternoon.

I have been so much agitated, that I have not been able to write since Sabbath day. When I say, that ten thousand reports are passing, vague and un-

certain as the wind, I believe I speak the truth. I am not able to give you any authentic account of last Saturday, but you will not be destitute of intelligence. Colonel Palmer has just sent me word, that he has an opportunity of conveyance. Incorrect as this scrawl will be, it shall go. I ardently pray, that you may be supported through the arduous task you have before you. I wish I could contradict the report of the Doctor's death; but it is a lamentable truth, and the tears of multitudes pay tribute to his memory; those favorite lines of Collins continually sound in my ears;

"How sleep the brave," &c.¹

I must close, as the Deacon waits. I have not pretended to be particular with regard to what I have heard, because I know you will collect better intelligence. The spirits of the people are very good; the loss of Charlestown affects them no more than a drop of the bucket. I am, most sincerely,

Yours,

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

22 June, 1775.

I RECEIVED yours of June 10th, for which I thank you. I want you to be more particular. Does every

¹ Collins's Ode is too well known to need insertion.

member feel for us? Can they realize what we suffer? And can they believe, with what patience and fortitude we endure the conflict? Nor do we even tremble at the frowns of power.

You inquire of me who were at the engagement at Grape Island. I may say, with truth, all of Weymouth, Braintree, Hingham, who were able to bear arms, and hundreds from other towns within twenty, thirty, and forty miles of Weymouth. Our good friend, the Doctor,¹ is in a miserable state of health, and hardly able to go from his own house to my father's. Danger, you know, sometimes makes timid men bold. He stood that day very well, and generously attended, with drink, biscuit, flints, &c., five hundred men, without taking any pay. He has since been chosen one of the Committee of Correspondence for that town, and has done much service, by establishing a regular method of alarm from town to town. Both your brothers were there; your younger brother, with his company, who gained honor by their good order that day. He was one of the first to venture on board a schooner, to land upon the island. As to Chelsea, I cannot be so particular, as I know only in general, that Colonel Putnam commanded there, and had many gentlemen volunteers. We have two companies stationed in this town; at Germantown, Captain Turner; at Squantum, Captain Vinton; in Weymouth, one; in Hingham, two, &c. I believe I shall remove your books this week to your brother's. We

¹ Dr. Tufts.

think it advisable. Colonel Quincy has procured his family a retreat at Deacon Holbrook's. Mr. Cranch has one at Major Bass's, in case of necessity, to which we hope not to be driven. We hear, that the troops destined for New York are all expected here; but we have got to that pass, that a whole legion of them would not intimidate us. I think I am very brave, upon the whole. If danger comes near my dwelling, I suppose I shall shudder. We want powder, but, with the blessing of Heaven, we fear them not. Write every opportunity you can.

I am yours,
PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 25 June, 1775.

DEAREST FRIEND,

My father has been more afflicted by the destruction of Charlestown than by any thing which has heretofore taken place. Why should not his countenance be sad, when the city, the place of his father's sepulchre, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Scarcely one stone remaineth upon another; but in the midst of sorrow we have abundant cause of thankfulness, that so few of our brethren are numbered with the slain, whilst our enemies were cut down like the grass before the scythe. But one officer of all the Welsh fusileers

remains to tell his story. Many poor wretches die for want of proper assistance and care of their wounds.

Every account agrees in fourteen or fifteen hundred slain and wounded upon their side, nor can I learn that they dissemble the number themselves. We had some heroes that day, who fought with amazing intrepidity and courage.

“Extremity is the trier of spirits;
— common chances common men can bear ;”
And “when the sea is calm, all boats alike
Show mastership in floating. But fortune’s blows,
When most struck home, being *bravely* warded, crave
A noble cunning.”

I hear that General Howe has said, that the battle upon the plains of Abram was but a bauble to this. When we consider all the circumstances attending this action, we stand astonished that our people were not all cut off. They had but one hundred feet intrenched, the number who were engaged did not exceed eight hundred, and they with not half ammunition enough ; the reinforcement not able to get to them seasonably. The tide was up, and high, so that their floating batteries came upon each side of the causeway, and their row-galleys kept a continual fire. Added to this, the fire from Cops Hill, and from the ships ; the town in flames, all around them, and the heat from the flames so intense as scarcely to be borne ; the day one of the hottest we have had this season, and the wind blowing the smoke in their faces, — only figure to yourself all these circumstan-

ces, and then consider that we do not count sixty men lost.¹ My heart overflows at the recollection.

We live in continual expectation of hostilities. Scarcely a day that does not produce some ; but, like good Nehemiah, having made our prayer unto God, and set the people with their swords, their spears, and their bows, we will say unto them, "Be not ye afraid of them ; remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your houses."

I have just received yours of the 17th of June, in seven days only ; every line from that far² country is precious ; you do not tell me how you do, but I will hope better. Alas, you little thought what distress we were in the day you wrote.³ They delight in molesting us upon the Sabbath. Two Sabbaths we have been in such alarm that we have had no meeting ; this day we have sat under our own vine in quietness ; have heard Mr. Taft, from Psalms, "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." The good man was earnest and pathetic ; I could forgive his weakness for the sake of his sincerity, but I long for a Cooper and an Eliot.

¹ This was below the truth ; but accuracy in these details will not be looked for in a letter written at the moment, upon information necessarily defective.

² The younger generation of the present day may need to be reminded that the "far country," a letter from which had arrived "in seven days *only*," was Philadelphia.

³ It is a little singular, that the letter written upon that day, gives her the first intelligence of the election of Washington to the chief command.

I want a person, who has feeling and sensibility, who can take one up with him,

And "in his duty prompt, at every call,"

Can "watch, and weep, and pray, and feel for all."

Mr. Rice joins General Heath's regiment to-morrow, as adjutant. Your brother is very desirous of being in the army, but your good mother is really violent against it. I cannot persuade nor reason her into a consent. Neither he nor I dare let her know that he is trying for a place. My brother has a captain's commission, and is stationed at Cambridge. I thought you had the best of intelligence, or I should have taken pains to be more particular. As to Boston, there are many persons yet there, who would be glad to get out if they could. Mr. Boylston, and Mr. Gill, the printer, with his family, are held upon the black list, it is said. 'Tis certain they watch them so narrowly, that they cannot escape. Mr. Mather got out a day or two before Charlestown was destroyed, and had lodged his papers and what else he got out, at Mr. Cary's, but they were all consumed; so were many other people's, who thought they might trust their little there, till teams could be procured to remove them. The people from the almshouse and workhouse were sent to the lines, last week, to make room for their wounded, they say. Medford people are all removed. Every seaport seems in motion. O North, may the groans and cries of the injured and oppressed harrow up thy soul. We have a prodigious army, but we lack many accommodations, which we

need. I hope the appointment of these new generals will give satisfaction ; they must be proof against calumny. In a contest like this, continual reports are circulated by our enemies, and they catch with the unwary and the gaping crowd, who are ready to listen to the marvellous, without considering of consequences, even though their best friends are injured.

I have not ventured to inquire one word of you about your return. I do not know whether I ought to wish for it ; it seems as if your sitting together was absolutely necessary, whilst every day is big with events.

Mr. Bowdoin called Friday, and took his leave of me, desiring I would present his affectionate regards to you. I have hopes that he will recover, he has mended a good deal. He wished he could have stayed in Braintree, but his lady was fearful.

Yours evermore,

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 5 July, 1775.

I HAVE received a good deal of paper from you. I wish it had been more covered ; the writing is very scant, yet I must not grumble. I know your time is not yours nor mine. Your labors must be great and your mouth closed ; but all you may communicate, I

beg you would. There is a pleasure, I know not whence it arises, nor can I stop now to find it out, but I say there is a degree of pleasure in being able to tell news, especially any that so nearly concerns us, as all your proceedings do.

I should have been more particular, but I thought you knew every thing that passed here. The present state of the inhabitants of Boston is that of the most abject slaves, under the most cruel and despotic of tyrants. Among many instances I could mention, let me relate one. Upon the 17th of June, printed handbills were posted up at the corners of the streets and upon houses, forbidding any inhabitants to go upon their houses, or upon any eminence, on pain of death; the inhabitants dared not to look out of their houses, nor to be heard or seen to ask a question. Our prisoners were brought over to the Long Wharf, and there lay all night, without any care of their wounds or any resting-place but the pavements, until the next day, when they exchanged it for the jail, since which we hear they are civilly treated. Their living cannot be good, as they can have no fresh provisions; their beef, we hear, is all gone, and their own wounded men die very fast, so that they have a report that the bullets were poisoned. Fish they cannot have, they have rendered it so difficult to procure; and the admiral is such a villain as to oblige every fishing schooner to pay a dollar every time it goes out. The money that has been paid for passes is incredible. Some have given ten, twenty, thirty, and forty dollars, to get out with

a small proportion of their things. It is reported and believed, that they have taken up a number of persons and committed them to jail, we know not for what in particular. Master Lovell is confined in the dungeon ; a son of Mr. Edes is in jail, and one Wibur, a ship carpenter, is now upon trial for his life. God alone knows to what length these wretches will go, and will I hope restrain their malice.

I would not have you be distressed about me. Danger, they say, makes people valiant. Hitherto I have been distressed, but not dismayed. I have felt for my country and her sons, and have bled with them and for them. Not all the havoc and devastation they have made, has wounded me like the death of Warren. We want him in the Senate ; we want him in his profession ; we want him in the field. We mourn for the citizen, the senator, the physician, and the warrior. May we have others raised up in his room.

I have had a very kind and friendly visit from our dear friends Colonel Warren, lady, and son. Mrs. Warren spent almost a week with me, and he came and met her here, and kept Sabbath with me. I suppose she will write to you, though she says you are in her debt.

You scarcely make mention of Dr. Franklin. Surely he must be a valuable member. Pray, what is become of your Judas ?¹ I see he is not with

¹ It is uncertain who is alluded to here ; probably Mr. Galloway of Pennsylvania, who was a member of the first Con-

you upon the list of delegates. I wish I could come and see you. I never suffer myself to think you are about returning soon. Can it, will it be? May I ask — may I wish for it? When once I expect you, the time will crawl till I see you. But hush! Do you know it is eleven o'clock at night? We have had some very fine rains since I wrote you last. I hope we shall not now have famine added to war. Grain, grain is what we want here. Meat we have enough, and to spare. Pray don't let Bass forget my pins. Hardwick has applied to me for Mr. Bass to get him a hundred of needles, number six, to carry on his stocking weaving. We shall very soon have no coffee, nor sugar, nor pepper here; but whortleberries and milk we are not obliged to commerce for. Good night. With thoughts of thee do I close my eyes. Angels guard and protect thee; and may a safe return ere long bless thy

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 16 July, 1775.

DEAREST FRIEND,

I HAVE seen your letters to Colonels Palmer and Warren. I pity your embarrassments. How difficult the task to quench the fire and the pride of pri-

gress, resisted the measures adopted by it, and subsequently became one of the most active of the loyal refugees.

vate ambition, and to sacrifice ourselves and all our hopes and expectations to the public weal! How few have souls capable of so noble an undertaking! How often are the laurels worn by those who have had no share in earning them! But there is a future recompense of reward, to which the upright man looks, and which he will most assuredly obtain, provided he perseveres unto the end.

The appointment of the generals Washington and Lee gives universal satisfaction. The people have the highest opinion of Lee's abilities, but you know the continuation of the popular breath depends much upon favorable events. I had the pleasure of seeing both the generals and their aids-de-camp soon after their arrival, and of being personally made known to them. They very politely express their regard for you. Major Mifflin said he had orders from you to visit me at Braintree. I told him I should be very happy to see him there, and accordingly sent Mr. Thaxter to Cambridge with a card, to him and Mr. Read, to dine with me. Mrs. Warren and her son were to be with me. They very politely received the message, and lamented that they were not able to come, upon account of expresses which they were on that day to get in readiness to send off.

I was struck with General Washington. You had prepared me to entertain a favorable opinion of him, but I thought the half was not told me. Dignity with ease and complacency, the gentleman and soldier, look agreeably blended in him. Modesty marks

every line and feature of his face. Those lines of Dryden instantly occurred to me ;

“ Mark his majestic fabric ! he 's a temple
Sacred by birth, and built by hands divine ;
His soul 's the deity that lodges there ;
Nor is the pile unworthy of the god.”

General Lee looks like a careless, hardy veteran, and, by his appearance, brought to my mind his namesake, Charles the Twelfth, of Sweden. The elegance of his pen far exceeds that of his person.

You have made frequent complaints that your friends do not write to you. I have stirred up some of them. May not I in my turn make complaints ? All the letters I receive from you seem to be written in so much haste, that they scarcely leave room for a social feeling. They let me know that you exist, but some of them contain scarcely six lines. I want some sentimental effusions of the heart. I am sure you are not destitute of them ; or are they all absorbed in the great public ? Much is due to that, I know ; but, being part of the public, I lay claim to a larger share than I have had. You used to be more communicative on Sundays. I always loved a Sabbath day's letter, for then you had a greater command of your time ; but hush to all complaints.

I am much surprised that you have not been more accurately informed of what passes in the camps. As to intelligence from Boston, it is but very seldom we are able to collect any thing that may be relied on ; and to report the vague, flying rumors, would be endless. I heard yesterday, by one Mr. Roulstone,

a goldsmith, who got out in a fishing schooner, that their distress increased upon them fast. Their beef is all spent; their malt and cider all gone. All the fresh provisions they can procure, they are obliged to give to the sick and wounded. Thirteen of our men who were in jail, and were wounded at the battle of Charlestown, were dead. No man dared now to be seen talking to his friend in the street. They were obliged to be within, every evening, at ten o'clock, according to martial law; nor could any inhabitant walk any street in town after that time, without a pass from Gage. He has ordered all the molasses to be distilled up into rum for the soldiers; taken away all licenses, and given out others, obliging to a forfeiture of ten pounds, if any rum is sold without written orders from the general. He gives much the same account of the killed and wounded we have from others. The spirit, he says, which prevails among the soldiers, is a spirit of malice and revenge; there is no true courage and bravery to be observed among them. Their duty is hard, always mounting guard with their packs at their backs, ready for an alarm, which they live in continual hazard of. Dr. Eliot is not on board a man-of-war, as has been reported, but perhaps was left in town, as the comfort and support of those who cannot escape. He was constantly with our prisoners. Messrs. Lovell and Leach, with others, are certainly in jail. A poor milch cow was last week killed in town, and sold for a shilling sterling per pound. The transports arrived last week from York, but every addi-

tional man adds to their distress. There has been a little expedition this week to Long Island.¹ There have been, before, several attempts to go on, but three men-of-war lay near, and cutters all round the island, so that they could not succeed. A number of whaleboats lay at Germantown. Three hundred volunteers, commanded by one Captain Tupper, came on Monday evening and took the boats, went on, and brought off seventy odd sheep, fifteen head of cattle, and sixteen prisoners, thirteen of whom were sent by (Simple Sapling)² to mow the hay, which they had very badly executed. They were all asleep in the house and barn. When they were taken, there were three women with them. Our heroes came off in triumph, not being observed by their enemies. This spirited up others, who could not endure the thought that the house and barn should afford them any shelter;—they did not destroy them the night before for fear of being discovered. Captain Wild, of this town, with about twenty-five of his company; Captain Gold, of Weymouth, with as many of his, and some other volunteers, to the amount of a hundred, obtained leave to go on and destroy the hay, together with the house and barn; and in open day, in full view of the men-of-war, they set off from the *Moon*,³ so called, cov-

¹ In Boston harbor. This event is repeatedly noticed in "The Remembrancer," for 1775, pp. 242, 257, 262.

² These are the words in the original, but the Editor cannot explain them.

³ The name given to a small island in Boston harbor.

ered by a number of men who were placed there, — went on and set fire to the buildings and hay. A number of armed cutters immediately surrounded the island and fired upon our men. They came off with a hot and continued fire upon them, the bullets flying in every direction, and the men-of-war's boats plying them with small arms. Many in this town, who were spectators, expected every moment our men would all be sacrificed, for sometimes they were so near as to be called and damned by their enemies, and ordered to surrender; yet they all returned in safety, not one man even wounded. Upon the Moon we lost one man, from the cannon on board the man-of-war. On the evening of the same day, a man-of-war came and anchored near Great Hill, and two cutters came to Pig Rocks. It occasioned an alarm in this town, and we were up all night. They remain there yet, but have not ventured to land any men.

This town have chosen their representative. Colonel Palmer is the man. There was a considerable muster upon Thayer's side, and Vinton's company marched up in order to assist, but got sadly disappointed. Newcomb insisted upon it that no man should vote who was in the army. He had no notion of being under the military power; said we might be so situated as to have the greater part of the people engaged in the military, and then all power would be wrested out of the hands of the civil magistrate. He insisted upon its being put to vote, and carried his point immediately. It brought

Thayer to his speech, who said all he could against it.

As to the situation of the camps, our men are in general healthy, much more so at Roxbury than at Cambridge, and the camp is in vastly better order. General Thomas has the character of an excellent officer. His merit has certainly been overlooked, as modest merit generally is. I hear General Washington is much pleased with his conduct.

Every article here in the West India way is very scarce and dear. In six weeks we shall not be able to purchase any article of the kind. I wish you would let Bass get me one pound of pepper, and two yards of black calamanco for shoes. I cannot wear leather, if I go barefoot. Bass may make a fine profit if he lays in a stock for himself. You can hardly imagine how much we want many common small articles, which are not manufactured amongst ourselves; but we will have them in time; not one pin to be purchased for love or money. I wish you could convey me a thousand by any friend travelling this way. It is very provoking to have such a plenty so near us, but, Tantalus-like, not be able to touch. I should have been glad to have laid in a small stock of the West India articles, but I cannot get one copper; no person thinks of paying any thing, and I do not choose to run in debt.

We have not yet been much distressed for grain. Every thing at present looks blooming. O that peace would once more extend her olive branch;

"This day be bread and peace my lot;
All else beneath the sun,
Thou knowest if best bestowed or not,
And let thy will be done."

"But is the Almighty ever bound to please,
Build by my wish, or studious of my ease?
Shall I determine where his frowns shall fall,
And fence my grotto from the lot of all?
Prostrate, his sovereign wisdom I adore,
Intreat his mercy, but I dare no more."

I have now written you all I can collect from every quarter. 'Tis fit for no eyes but yours, because you can make all necessary allowances. I cannot copy.

There are yet in town three of the selectmen and some thousands of inhabitants, 't is said. I hope to hear from you soon. Do let me know if there is any prospect of seeing you? Next Wednesday is thirteen weeks since you went away. I must bid you adieu.

You have many friends, though they have not noticed you by writing. I am sorry they have been so negligent. I hope no share of that blame lies upon
Your most affectionate

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 25 July, 1775.

DEAREST FRIEND,

I RECEIVED yours of July 7th, for which I heartily thank you. It was the longest and best letter I have

had ; the most leisurely, and therefore the most sentimental. Previous to your last, I had written you and made some complaints of you, but I will take them all back again. Only continue your obliging favors, whenever your time will allow you to devote one moment to your absent Portia.

This is the 25th of July. Gage has not made any attempts to march out since the battle at Charlestown. Our army is restless, and wish to be doing something to rid themselves and the land of the vermin and locusts which infest it. Since I wrote you last, the companies stationed upon the coast, both in this town, Weymouth, and Hingham, were ordered to Nantasket, to reap and bring off the grain, which they accomplished, all except a field or two which was not ripe ; and having whaleboats, they undertook to go to the Lighthouse and set fire to it, which they effected in open day, and in fair sight of several men-of-war. Upon their return, came down upon them eight barges, one cutter, and one schooner, all in battle array, and poured whole broad sides upon them ; but our men all reached the shore, and not one life lost, two only slightly wounded in their legs. They marched up a hill, and drew into order, in hopes the marines would land ; but they chose rather to return without a land engagement, though 't is thought they will burn the town down as soon as our forces leave it. I had this account from Captain Vinton, who with his company were there. These little skirmishes seem trifling, but they serve to inure our men, and harden them to danger. I hear the

rebels are very wroth at the destruction of the light-house.

There has been an offer from Gage to send the poor of Boston to Salem by water, but not complied with on our part; they returned for answer, they would receive them upon the lines. Dr. Tufts saw a letter from Deacon Newall, in which he mentions the death of John Cotton; he says it is very sickly in town. Every fishing vessel is now obliged to enter and clear out, as though she was going a foreign voyage. No inhabitant is suffered to partake, but obliged to wait till the army is supplied, and then, if one remains, they are allowed to purchase it. An order has been given out in town, that no person shall be seen to wipe his face with a white handkerchief. The reason I hear is, that it is a signal of mutiny. General Burgoyne lives in Mr. Sam Quincy's house. A lady, who lived opposite, says she saw raw meat cut and hacked upon her mahogany tables, and her superb damask curtain and cushions exposed to the rain as if they were of no value. How much better do the Tories fare than the Whigs? I suppose this worthy, good man was put in with all confidence that nothing should be hurt.

I was very much pleased with General Lee's letter,¹ and really entertained a more favorable opinion of Burgoyne than I before had imbibed from his speech; but a late letter from London, written to Mr.

¹ This correspondence between Lee and Burgoyne, is in "The Remembrancer," for 1775, pp. 150 *et seq.*

Josiah Quincy, and, in case of his absence, to be opened either by you or Mr. Samuel Adams, or either of the Warrens, has left me no room to think that he is possessed either of generosity, virtue, or humanity. His character runs thus ;

“As to Burgoyne,¹ I am not master of language sufficient to give you a true idea of the horrible wickedness of the man. His designs are dark ; his dissimulation of the deepest dye ; for, not content with deceiving mankind, he practises deceit on God himself, by assuming the appearance (like Hutchinson) of great attention to religious worship, when every action of his life is totally abhorrent to all ideas of true religion, virtue, or common honesty. An abandoned, infamous gambler, of broken fortune, and the worst and most detestable of the Bedford gang, who are wholly bent on blood, tyranny, and spoil, and therefore the darling favorite of our unrivalled ruler, Lord Bute.”

The character of Howe is not drawn much more favorably, but Clinton's general character very good, and 't is said he does not relish the service he is sent upon. I am ready to believe this of Clinton, as I have never heard of any speeches of his since his arrival, nor scarcely any mention of him. That such characters as Burgoyne and Howe should engage in such a cause is not to be wondered at ; but it

¹ Much allowance must occasionally be made for the excitement naturally growing out of the circumstances of the war. General Burgoyne by no means bore any such character as this.

is really to be lamented, when a man, possessed of one spark of virtue, should be drawn aside, and disgrace himself and posterity by adding one more to the already infamous list. I suppose you have heard of Darby's arrival,¹ and the intelligence he brings. I could not refrain wishing them everlasting fetters; "the news received with some symptoms of pleasure," and "our friends increased," and a few more such sugar plums. Were they suffering as we are, could Americans sit thus coldly whilst Britons were bleeding? How is it possible, that the love of gain and the lust of domination should render the human mind so callous to every principle of honor, generosity, and benevolence?

May that day be far distant from America, when "trade's unfeeling train," shall "usurp this land, and dispossess the swain."

"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay;
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied."

Your address meets with general approbation here; your petitioning the King again, pleases (forgive me if I say the timid and the weak) those persons who were esteemed the lukewarm, and who think no works of supererogation can be performed to Great

¹ From England.

Britain ; whilst others say you heap coals of fire upon the heads of your enemies. You know you are considered here as a most perfect body ; if one member is by any means rendered incapable of acting, 't is supposed the deficiency will be made up. The query is, why your President left the Congress so long as to make it necessary to choose another member, — whether he declined returning to you again ?

I suppose you have a list of our Council. It was generally thought that Gage would make an attempt to come out either Election day, or upon the Fast ; but I could not believe we should be disturbed upon that day. Even “ the devils believe and tremble,” and I really believe they are more afraid of the Americans' prayers than of their swords. I could not bear to hear our inanimate old bachelor. Mrs. Cranch and I took our chaise and went to hear Mr. Haven, of Dedham, and we had no occasion to repent eleven miles' ride ; especially as I had the pleasure of spending the day with my namesake and sister delegate. Why should we not assume your titles when we give you up our names ? I found her comfortably situated in a little country cottage, with patience, perseverance, and fortitude for her companions, and in better health than she has enjoyed for many months past.

I fear General Thomas being overlooked, and Heath placed over him, will create much uneasiness. I know not who was to blame, but it is likely to make a great and fatal gap in the army. If Tho-

mas resigns, all his officers resign ; and Mr. Thomas cannot with honor hold under Heath. The camp will evince to every eye how good an officer he has been ; but this is out of my sphere. I only say what others say, and what the general disposition of the people is.

I need not say how much I want to see you, but no one will credit my story of your returning in a month. I hope to have the best of proofs to convince them.

It cannot need any to convince you how sincerely
I am your affectionate

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 31 July, 1775.

I do not feel easy more than two days together without writing to you. If you abound, you must lay some of the fault upon yourself, who have made such sad complaints for letters ; but I really believe I have written more than all my sister delegates. There is nothing new transpired since I wrote you last, but the sailing of some transports, and five deserters having come into our camp. One of them is gone, I hear, to Philadelphia. I think I should be cautious of him. No one can tell the secret designs of such fellows, whom no oath binds. He may be

sent with assassinating designs. I can credit any villany, that a Cæsar Borgia would have been guilty of, or Satan himself would rejoice in. Those who do not scruple to bring poverty, misery, slavery, and death upon thousands, will not hesitate at the most diabolical crimes; and this is Britain. Blush, O Americans, that ever you derived your origin from such a race.

We learn from one of these deserters, that our ever valued friend, Warren, dear to us even in death, was not treated with any more respect than a common soldier; but the savage wretches, called officers, consulted together, and agreed to sever his head from his body and carry it in triumph to Gage, who no doubt would have "grinned horribly a ghastly smile," instead of imitating Cæsar, who far from being gratified with so horrid a spectacle as the head even of his enemy, turned away from Pompey's with disgust, and gave vent to his pity in a flood of tears. How much does Pagan tenderness put Christian benevolence to shame! What humanity could not obtain, the rites and ceremonies of a mason demanded. An officer, who, it seems, was one of the brotherhood, requested, that as a mason, he might have the body unmangled, and find a decent interment for it. He obtained his request, but, upon returning to secure it, he found it already thrown into the earth, only with the ceremony of being first placed there with many bodies over him;

"Nor writ his name, whose tomb should pierce the skies."

"Glow's my resentment into guilt? What guilt
Can equal violations of the dead?
The dead how sacred! Sacred is the dust
Of this heaven-labored form, erect, divine!
This heaven-assumed, majestic robe of earth."

2 August.

Thus far I wrote and broke off; hearing there was a probability of your return, I thought not to send it; but the reception of yours this morning, of July 23d, makes me think the day further off than I hoped. I therefore will add a few lines, though very unfit. I went out yesterday to attend the funeral of the poor fellow who, the night before, fell in battle, as they were returning from the lighthouse; I caught some cold. Sabbath evening there was a warm fire from Prospect Hill and Bunker's Hill, begun first by the riflemen taking off their guard. Two men upon our side were killed; five of their guards were killed, two taken. I believe my account will be very confused, but I will relate it as well as I am able.¹ Sabbath evening a number of men, in whaleboats, went off from Squantum and Dorchester, to the lighthouse, where the general, Gage, had again fixed up a lamp, and sent twelve carpenters to repair it. Our people went on amidst a hot fire from thirty marines, who were placed there as a guard to the Tory carpenters, burnt the dwellinghouse, took the Tories and twenty-eight marines, killed the lieutenant and one man,

¹ These events are briefly mentioned in "The Remembrancer," for the year 1775, pp. 269, 270.

brought off all the oil and stores which were sent, without the loss of a man, until they were upon their return ; when they were so closely pursued, that they were obliged to run one whaleboat ashore, and leave her to them ; the rest arrived safe, except the unhappy youth, whose funeral I yesterday attended, who received a ball through the temple, as he was rowing the boat. He belonged to Rhode Island. His name was Griffin. He, with four wounded marines, was brought by Captain Turner to Germantown, and buried from there with the honors of war. Mr. Wi-bird, upon the occasion, made the best oration (he never prays, you know,) I ever heard from him. The poor wounded fellows (who were all wounded in their arms) desired they might attend. They did, and he very pathetically addressed them, with which they appeared affected. I spoke with them, — I told them, it was very unhappy that they should be obliged to fight their best friends. They said they were sorry ; they hoped in God an end would be speedily put to the unhappy contest ; when they came, they came in the way of their duty, to relieve Admiral Montague, with no thought of fighting, but their situation was such as obliged them to obey orders ; but they wished with all their souls, that they that sent them here had been in the heat of the battle ; expressed gratitude at the kindness they received ; and said in that they had been deceived, for they were told, if they were taken alive, they would be sacrificed by us. Dr. Tufts dressed their wounds.

I had a design to write something about a talked

of appointment of a friend of mine to a judicial department,¹ but hope soon to see that friend, before his acceptance may be necessary. I enclose a compliment, copied by a gentleman from a piece in the Worcester paper, signed "Lycurgus."

I can add no more, as the good Colonel Palmer waits. Only my compliments to Mrs. Mifflin, and tell her I do not know whether her husband is safe here. Bellona and Cupid have a contest about him. You hear nothing from the ladies but about Major Mifflin's easy address, politeness, complaisance, &c. 'T is well he has so agreeable a lady at Philadelphia. They know nothing about forts, intrenchments, &c., when they return ; or, if they do, they are all forgotten and swallowed up in his accomplishments.

Adieu, my dearest friend, and always believe me
Unalterably yours,

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.²

Weymouth, 1 October, 1775.

HAVE pity upon me. Have pity upon me, O thou my beloved, for the hand of God presseth me sore.

¹ Mr. Adams was made Chief Justice of the State Court, but never acted in that capacity.

² Mr Adams was at home during the adjournment of Congress, from the 1st of August, to the 5th of September.

Yet will I be dumb and silent, and not open my mouth, because thou, O Lord, hast done it.

How can I tell you, (O my bursting heart!) that my dear mother has left me?—this day, about five o'clock, she left this world for an infinitely better.

After sustaining sixteen days' severe conflict, nature fainted, and she fell asleep. Blessed spirit! where art thou? At times, I am almost ready to faint under this severe and heavy stroke, separated from *thee*, who used to be a comforter to me in affliction; but, blessed be God, his ear is not heavy that he cannot hear, but he has bid us call upon him in time of trouble.

I know you are a sincere and hearty mourner with me, and will pray for me in my affliction. My poor father, like a firm believer and a good Christian, sets before his children the best of examples of patience and submission. My sisters send their love to you, and are greatly afflicted. You often expressed your anxiety for me when you left me before, surrounded with terrors; but my trouble then was as the small dust in the balance, compared to what I have since endured. I hope to be properly mindful of the correcting hand, that I may not be rebuked in anger.

You will pardon and forgive all my wanderings of mind, I cannot be correct.

'T is a dreadful time with the whole province. Sickness and death are in almost every family. I

have no more shocking and terrible idea of any distemper, except the plague, than this.¹

Almighty God ! restrain the pestilence which walketh in darkness and wasteth at noonday, and which has laid in the dust one of the dearest of parents. May the life of the other be lengthened out to his afflicted children.

From your distressed

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 21 October, 1775.

THE sickness has abated here and in the neighbouring towns. In Boston I am told it is very sickly among the inhabitants and the soldiery. By a man, one Haskins, who came out the day before yesterday, I learn, that there are but about twenty-five hundred soldiers in town. How many there are at Charlestown, he could not tell. He had been in irons three weeks, some malicious fellow having said that he saw him at the battle of Lexington ; but he proved that he was not out of Boston that day, upon which he was re-

¹ The dysentery prevailed among the British troops, who were great sufferers from their confinement in Boston, and it appears to have spread among the inhabitants in the vicinity. Mrs. Adams lost, besides her mother and a brother of her husband, a domestic in her own house ; but she and the rest of her family, who were all, with a single exception, more or less ill, recovered.

leased, and went with two other men out in a small boat, under their eye, to fish. They played about near the shore, while catching small fish, till they thought they could possibly reach Dorchester Neck ; no sooner were they perceived attempting to escape, than they had twenty cannons discharged at them, but they all happily reached the shore. He says, no language can paint the distress of the inhabitants ; most of them destitute of wood and of provisions of every kind. The bakers say, unless they have a new supply of wood, they cannot bake above one fortnight longer ; their biscuit are not above one half the former size ; the soldiers are obliged to do very hard duty, and are uneasy to a great degree, many of them declaring they will not continue much longer in such a state, but at all hazards will escape. The inhabitants are desperate, and contriving means of escape. A floating battery of ours, went out two nights ago, and rowed near the town, and then discharged their guns. Some of the balls went into the workhouse, some through the tents in the Common, and one through the sign of the Lamb Tavern. He says, it drove them all out of the Common, men, women, and children screaming, and threw them into the utmost distress ; but, very unhappily for us, in the discharge of one of the cannon, the ball not being properly rammed down, it split and killed two men, and wounded seven more, upon which they were obliged to return. He also says, that the Tories are much distressed about the fate of Dr. Church, and very anxious to obtain him, and would exchange

Lovell for him. This man is so exasperated at the ill usage he has received from them, that he is determined to enlist immediately. They almost starved him whilst he was in irons. He says, he hopes it will be in his power to send some of them to heaven for mercy. They are building a fort by the hay-market, and rending down houses for timber to do it with. In the course of the last week, several persons have found means to escape. One of them says it is talked in town, that Howe will issue a proclamation, giving liberty to all, who will not take up arms, to depart the town, and making it death to have any intercourse with the country afterwards.

At present it looks as if there was no likelihood of peace; the ministry are determined to proceed at all events; the people are already slaves, and have neither virtue nor spirit to help themselves nor us. The time is hastening, when George, like Richard, may cry, "My kingdom for a horse!" and want even that wealth to make the purchase. I hope by degrees, we shall be inured to hardships, and become a virtuous, valiant people, forgetting our former luxury, and each one apply with industry and frugality to manufactures and husbandry, till we rival all other nations by our virtues.

I thank you for your amusing account of the Quaker; their great stress with regard to color in their dress, &c., is not the only ridiculous part of their sentiments with regard to religious matters.

"There's not a day, but to the man of thought
Betrays some secret, that throws new reproach
On life, and makes him sick of seeing more."

What are your thoughts with regard to Dr. Church ? Had you much knowledge of him ? I think you had no intimate acquaintance with him.

“ A foe to God was ne’er true friend to man ;
Some sinister intent taints all he does.”

It is matter of great speculation what will be his punishment ; the people are much enraged against him ; if he is set at liberty, even after he has received a severe punishment, I do not think he will be safe. He will be despised and detested by every one, and many suspicions will remain in the minds of people in regard to our rulers ; they are for supposing *this* person is not sincere, and *that* one they have jealousy of.

Have you any prospect of returning ? I hoped to have heard from you by the gentlemen who came as a committee here ; but they have been here a week, and I have not any letters.

My father and sister Betsey desire to be remembered to you. He is very disconsolate. It makes my heart ache to see him, and I know not how to go to the house. He said to me the other day, “ Child, I see your mother, go to what part of the house I will.” I think he has lost almost as much flesh as if he had been sick ; and Betsey, poor girl, looks broken and worn with grief. These near connexions, how they twist and cling about the heart, and when torn off, draw the best blood from it.

“ Each friend by fate snatched from us, is a plume
Plucked from the wing of human vanity.”

Be so good as to present my regards to Mrs. Hancock. I hope she is very happy. Mrs. Warren called upon me on her way to Watertown. I wish I could as easily come to you as she can go to Watertown. But it is my lot. In the twelve years we have been married, I believe we have not lived together more than six.

If you could, with any conveniency, procure me the articles I wrote for, I should be very glad, more especially the needles and cloth; they are in such demand, that we are really distressed for want of them.

Adieu. I think of nothing further to add, but that I am, with the tenderest regard, your

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 22 October, 1775.

MR. LOTHROP called here this evening, and brought me yours of the 1st of October; a day which will ever be remembered by me, for it was the most distressing one I ever experienced. That morning I rose, and went into my mother's room, not apprehending her so near her exit; went to her bed with a cup of tea in my hand, and raised her head to give it to her. She swallowed a few drops, gasped, and fell back upon her pillow, opening her eyes with a look that pierced my heart, and which I shall never forget; it was the eagerness of a last look;

"And O, the last sad silence of a friend."

Yet she lived till five o'clock that day, but I could not be with her. My dear father prayed twice beside her bed that day. God Almighty was with him and supported him that day, and enabled him to go through the services of it. It was his communion day ; he had there a tender scene to pass through, a young granddaughter, Betsey Cranch, joining herself to the church, and a beloved wife dying, to pray for. Weeping children, weeping and mourning parishioners all round him, for every eye streamed, his own heart almost bursting as he spoke. How painful is the recollection, and yet how pleasing !

I know I wound your heart. Why should I ? Ought I to give relief to my own by paining yours ?

“ Yet the grief, that cannot speak,
Whispers the o'erfraught heart, and bids it burst.”

My pen is always freer than my tongue. I have written many things to you that I suppose I never could have talked. My heart is made tender by repeated affliction ; it never was a hard heart. The death of Patty came very near me, having lived four years with me under my care. I hope it will make me more continually mindful and watchful of all those who are still committed to my charge. 'T is a great trust ; I daily feel more and more of the weight and importance of it, and of my own inability. I wish I could have more of the assistance of my dearest friend, but these perilous times swallow him up.

Mr. Lothrop has given me this account of the de-

mand upon Falmouth. A man-of-war and two tenders went down, and sent to the inhabitants to demand their arms, and require them to stand neuter. They required time to consider ; they had until nine o'clock the next day, which time they employed in removing the women, children, and *the rest of their most valuable effects*, out of danger, when they sent their answer in the negative. Upon this, the enemy began a cannonade, and were continuing it when the express came away. Hitchbourne and another gentleman got out of town in a small boat, one of the foggy nights we have had this week. I have not heard what intelligence he brings. Another person says, that Howe enlarged all the prisoners but Lovell, and he would not come out.

I have since seen the Paraphrase,¹ as it is called ; but 't is as low as the mock oration,¹ though no reflection upon your private character, further than immoderately whipping your scholars when you kept school ; a crime any one will acquit you of who knows you. As a specimen of the wit and humor it contained, I will give you the title. "A Paraphrase upon the Second Epistle of John the Roundhead, to James, the Prolocutor of the Rump Parliament. Dear Devil," &c. I had it, but it was when I was in so much distress that I cared nothing about it. I will

¹ Scurrilous publications, made by the Tories and British officers in Boston, during the siege. The first of these was a paraphrase of an intercepted letter of Mr. Adams, to General James Warren, then President of the Provincial Congress.

mention, when I see you, the foolish conjectures of some, who want always to be finding out something extraordinary in whatever happens.

I hope to hear often from you, which is all the alleviation I have in your absence, and is, next to seeing you, the greatest comfort of your

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

5 November, 1775.

I HOPE you have received several letters from me in this fortnight past. I wrote by Mr. Lynch and by Dr. Franklin, the latter of whom I had the pleasure of dining with, and of admiring him, whose character from my infancy I had been taught to venerate. I found him social but not talkative, and, when he spoke, something useful dropped from his tongue. He was grave, yet pleasant and affable. You know I make some pretensions to physiognomy, and I thought I could read in his countenance the virtues of his heart, among which, patriotism shone in its full lustre ; and with that is blended every virtue of a Christian. For a true patriot must be a religious man. I have been led to think from a late defection,¹ that he who neglects his duty to his Maker, may well be expected to be deficient and insincere in his duty towards the public. Even suppose him to possess a large share of what is called honor and pub-

¹ Of Dr. Church.

lic spirit, yet, do not these men, by their bad example, by a loose, immoral conduct, corrupt the minds of youth, and vitiate the morals of the age, and thus injure the public more than they can compensate by intrepidity, generosity, and honor? Let revenge or ambition, pride, lust, or profit, tempt these men to a base and vile action; you may as well hope to bind up a hungry tiger with a cobweb, as to hold such debauched patriots in the visionary chains of decency, or to charm them with the intellectual beauty of truth and reason.

But where am I running? I mean to thank you for all your obliging favors lately received; and though some of them are very laconic, yet, were they to contain only two lines to tell me that you were well, they would be acceptable to me. I think however, you are more apprehensive than you need be; the gentleman, to whose care they have always been directed, has been very kind in his conveyance, and very careful. I hope, however, that it will not now be long before we shall have nearer interviews. You must tell me, that you will return next month; a late appointment¹ will make it inconvenient (provided you accept) for you to go again to Congress.

It seems human nature is the same in all ages and countries. Ambition and avarice reign everywhere, and, where they predominate, there will be bickerings after places of honor and profit. There is an old adage, "Kissing goes by favor," that is daily veri-

¹ That of Chief Justice, alluded to in a preceding letter.

fied. I inclose to you the paper you sent for. Your business in collecting facts will be very difficult, and the sufferings of this people cannot be described with pen, ink, and paper. Besides, these ministers of Satan are rendering it every day more and more difficult, by their ravages and devastation, to tell a tale which will freeze the young blood of succeeding generations, as well as harrow up the souls of the present.

Nothing new has transpired since I wrote you last. I have not heard of one person's escape out of town, nor of any manœuvre of any kind.

I will only ask you to measure by your own the affectionate regard of your nearest friend.¹

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 12 November, 1775.

THE intelligence² you will receive before this reaches you, will, I should think, make a plain path, though a dangerous one, for you. I could not join to-day, in the petitions of our worthy pastor, for a reconciliation between our no longer parent state, but tyrant

¹ This letter is without signature, as was generally the case during the war, when a fictitious one was not attached.

² This probably alludes to the act passed by the Provincial Congress on the 10th of the month, to authorize privateering. "The first avowal of offensive hostility against the mother country to be found in the annals of the revolution." Austin's Life of E. Gerry, Vol. I. p. 94, and Appendix A.

state, and these colonies. Let us separate ; they are unworthy to be our brethren. Let us renounce them ; and, instead of supplications as formerly, for their prosperity and happiness, let us beseech the Almighty to blast their counsels, and bring to nought all their devices.

I have nothing remarkable to write you. A little skirmish happened last week ; the particulars I have endeavoured to collect, but whether I have the facts right, I am not certain. A number of cattle were kept at Lechmere's point, where two sentinels were placed. In a high tide, it is an island ; the regulars had observed this, and a scheme was laid to send a number of them over and take off the stock. Accordingly a number of boats and about four hundred men were sent. They landed, it seems, unperceived by the sentinels, who were asleep ; one of whom they killed, and took the other prisoner. As soon as they were perceived, they fired the cannon from Prospect Hill upon them, which sunk one of their boats ; but, as the tide was very high, it was difficult getting over, and some time before any alarm was given. A Colonel Thompson, of the riflemen, marched instantly with his men ; and, though a very stormy day, they regarded not the tide nor waited for boats, but marched over neck high in water, and discharged their pieces, when the regulars ran, without waiting to get off their stock, and made the best of their way to the opposite shore.¹ The General sent his

¹ This affair also is mentioned in "The Remembrancer" for 1776, Vol. I. p. 229.

thanks in a public manner to the brave officer and his men. Major Mifflin, I hear, was there, and flew about as though he would have raised the whole army. May they never find us deficient in courage and spirit.

Dr. Franklin invited me to spend the winter in Philadelphia. I shall wish to be there unless you return. I have been like a nun in a cloister, ever since you went away, and have not been into any other house than my father's and sister's, except once to Colonel Quincy's. Indeed, I have had no inclination for company. My evenings are lonesome and melancholy. In the daytime family affairs take off my attention, but the evenings are spent with my departed parent. I then ruminate upon all her care and tenderness, and am sometimes lost and absorbed in a flood of tenderness, ere I am aware of it, or can call to my aid my only prop and support. I must bid you adieu ; 't is late at night.

Most affectionately yours.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

27 November, 1775.

COLONEL WARREN returned last week to Plymouth, so that I shall not hear any thing from you, until he goes back again, which will not be till the last of this month. He damped my spirits greatly by tell-

ing me, that the Court¹ had prolonged your stay another month. I was pleasing myself with the thought, that you would soon be upon your return. It is in vain to repine. I hope the public will reap what I sacrifice.

I wish I knew what mighty things were fabricating. If a form of government is to be established here, what one will be assumed? Will it be left to our Assemblies to choose one? And will not many men have many minds? And shall we not run into dissensions among ourselves?

I am more and more convinced, that man is a dangerous creature; and that power, whether vested in many or a few, is ever grasping, and, like the grave, cries "Give, give." The great fish swallow up the small; and he, who is most strenuous for the rights of the people, when vested with power is as eager after the prerogatives of government. You tell me of degrees of perfection to which human nature is capable of arriving, and I believe it, but, at the same time, lament that our admiration should arise from the scarcity of the instances.

The building up a great empire, which was only hinted at by my correspondent, may now, I suppose, be realized even by the unbelievers. Yet, will not ten thousand difficulties arise in the formation of it? The reins of government have been so long slackened, that I fear the people will not quietly submit to those restraints, which are necessary for the peace

¹ The General Court of the Province.

and security of the community. If we separate from Britain, what code of laws will be established? How shall we be governed, so as to retain our liberties? Can any government be free, which is not administered by general stated laws? Who shall frame these laws? Who will give them force and energy? It is true, your resolutions, as a body, have hitherto had the force of laws; but will they continue to have?

When I consider these things, and the prejudices of people in favor of ancient customs and regulations, I feel anxious for the fate of our monarchy or democracy, or whatever is to take place. I soon get lost in a labyrinth of perplexities; but, whatever occurs, may justice and righteousness be the stability of our times, and order arise out of confusion. Great difficulties may be surmounted by patience and perseverance.

I believe, I have tired you with politics; as to news we have not any at all. I shudder at the approach of winter, when I think I am to remain desolate.

I must bid you good night; 't is late for me, who am much of an invalid. I was disappointed last week in receiving a packet by the post, and, upon unsealing it, finding only four newspapers. I think you are more cautious than you need be. All letters, I believe, have come safe to hand. I have sixteen from you, and wish I had as many more.

Adieu, yours.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 10 December, 1775.

I RECEIVED your obliging favor by Mrs. Morgan, with the papers and the other articles you sent, which were very acceptable to me, as they are not to be purchased here. I shall be very choice of them.

I have, according to your desire, been upon a visit to Mrs. Morgan, who keeps at Major Mifflin's. I had received a message from Mrs. Mifflin some time ago, desiring I would visit her. My father, who, you know, is very obliging in this way, accompanied me, and I had the pleasure of drinking coffee with the Doctor and his lady, the Major and his lady, and a Mr. and Mrs. Smith from New York, a daughter of the famous son of liberty, Captain Sears; Generals Gates and Lee; a Dr. M^cHenry and a Mr. Elwyn, with many others who were strangers to me. I was very politely entertained, and noticed by the generals; more especially General Lee, who was very urgent with me to tarry in town, and dine with him and the ladies present, at Hobgoblin Hall, but I excused myself. The General was determined, that I should not only be acquainted with him, but with his companions too, and therefore placed a chair before me, into which he ordered Mr. Spada to mount and present his paw to me for a better acquaintance. I could not do otherwise than accept

it. "That, Madam," says he, "is the dog which Mr. — has rendered famous."

I was so little while in company with these persons, and the company so mixed, that it was almost impossible to form any judgment of them. The Doctor appeared modest, and his lady affable and agreeable. Major Mifflin, you know, I was always an admirer of, as well as of his delicate lady. I believe Philadelphia must be an unfertile soil, or it would not produce so many unfruitful women. I always conceive of these persons as wanting one addition to their happiness; but, in these perilous times, I know not, whether it ought to be considered as an infelicity, since they are certainly freed from the anxiety every parent must feel for their rising offspring.

I drank coffee one day with General Sullivan upon Winter Hill. He appears to be a man of sense and spirit. His countenance denotes him of a warm constitution, not to be very suddenly moved, but, when once roused, not very easily lulled,—easy and social,—well calculated for a military station, as he seems to be possessed of those popular qualities, necessary to attach men to him.

By the way, I congratulate you upon our late noble acquisition of military stores.¹ It is a most grand mortar, I assure you. Surely Heaven smiles upon us in many respects, and we have continually

¹ By the capture of the brig *Nancy*, bound for Boston, with ordnance from Woolwich.

to speak of mercies, as well as of judgments. I wish our gratitude may be anywise proportionate to our benefits. I suppose, in Congress, you think of every thing relative to trade and commerce, as well as other things ; but, as I have been desired to mention to you some things, I shall not omit them. One is, that there may be something done, in a Continental way, with regard to excise upon spirituous liquors, that each of the New England colonies may be upon the same footing ; whereas we formerly used to pay an excise, and the other colonies none, or very little, by which means they drew away our trade. That an excise is necessary, though it may be objected to by the mercantile interest, as a too frequent use of spirits endangers the wellbeing of society. Another article is, that some method may be devised to keep among us our gold and silver, which are now every day shipped off to the West Indies for molasses, coffee, and sugar ; and this I can say of my own knowledge, that a dollar in silver is now become a great rarity, and our traders will give you a hundred pounds of paper for ninety of silver, or nearly that proportion. If any trade is allowed to the West Indies, would it not be better to carry some commodity of our own produce in exchange ? Medicines, cotton wool, and some other articles, we are in great want of. Formerly we used to purchase cotton wool at one shilling, lawful money, per bag ; now it is three, and the scarcity of that article distresses us, as it was wrought up with less trouble than any other article of clothing. Flax is now from

a shilling to one and sixpence per pound, sheep's wool eighteen pence, and linens not to be had at any price. I cannot mention the article in the English goods way, which is not double; and, in the West India, molasses by retail I used formerly to purchase at one and eight pence,—now it is two and eight pence; rum, three shillings; coffee, one and three pence, and all other things in proportion. Corn is four shillings per bushel; rye, five; oats, three and eight pence; hay, five and six shillings per hundred; wood, twenty shillings per cord; but meat of all kinds cheap.

My uncle Quincy desires to be remembered to you; he inquired when you talked of coming home. I told him you had not fixed any time. He says, if you don't come soon, he would advise me to procure another husband. He,¹ of all persons, ought not to give me such advice, I told him, unless he set a better example himself.

Be kind enough to burn this letter. It is written in great haste, and a most incorrect scrawl it is. But I cannot conclude without telling you, we are all very angry with your House of Assembly for their instructions.² They raise prejudices in the minds of

¹ Norton Quincy, the only son of Colonel John Quincy, and the uncle of Mrs. Adams, was married early. His wife died within the first year of the marriage, and the depth of his feelings at this bereavement was such as to make him a recluse for life. Hence the point of her remark.

² It is a little doubtful to what this alludes. Probably to the application made by New Hampshire to Congress, for

people, and serve to create in their minds a terror at a separation from a people wholly unworthy of us. We are a little of the spaniel kind; though so often spurned, still to fawn, argues a meanness of spirit, that, as an individual, I disclaim, and would rather endure any hardship than submit to it.

Yours.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Saturday Evening, 2 March, 1776.

I WAS greatly rejoiced, at the return of your servant, to find you had safely arrived, and that you were well. I had never heard a word from you after you had left New York, and a most ridiculous story had been industriously propagated in this and the neighbouring towns to injure the cause and blast your reputation; namely, that you and your President¹ had gone on board of a man-of-war from New York, and sailed for England. I should not mention so idle a report, but that it had given uneasiness to some of your friends; not that they, in the least, credited the report, but because the gaping vulgar swallowed the story. One man² had deserted them

advice to establish a form of government for itself. This advice was given, although not without reluctance. A number of the members opposed it, as being too decisive a step towards independence. — See Gordon's "History," Vol. II. p. 150.

¹ John Hancock.

² Dr. Church.

and proved a traitor, another might, &c. I assure you, such high disputes took place in the public house of this parish, that some men were collared and dragged out of the shop with great threats, for reporting such scandalous lies, and an uncle of ours offered his life as a forfeit for you, if the report proved true. However, it has been a nine days' marvel, and will now cease. I heartily wish every Tory was extirpated from America ; they are continually, by secret means, undermining and injuring our cause.

I am charmed with the sentiments of "Common Sense," and wonder how an honest heart, one who wishes the welfare of his country and the happiness of posterity, can hesitate one moment at adopting them. I want to know how these sentiments are received in Congress. I dare say there would be no difficulty in procuring a vote and instructions from all the Assemblies in New England for Independency. I most sincerely wish, that now, in the lucky moment, it might be done.

I have been kept in a continual state of anxiety and expectation, ever since you left me. It has been said "to-morrow" and "to-morrow" for this month, but when the dreadful to-morrow will be, I know not. But hark ! The house this instant shakes with the roar of cannon. I have been to the door and find it is a cannonade from our army. Orders, I find, are come for all the remaining militia to repair to the lines Monday night by twelve o'clock. No sleep for me to-night. And if I cannot, who have no guilt

upon my soul with regard to this cause, how shall the miserable wretches, who have been the procurers of this dreadful scene, and those who are to be the actors, lie down with the load of guilt upon their souls ?

Sunday Evening, 3 March.

I went to bed after twelve, but got no rest ; the cannon continued firing; and my heart beat pace with them all night. We have had a pretty quiet day, but what to-morrow will bring forth, God only knows.

Monday Evening.

Tolerably quiet. To-day the militia have all mustered, with three days' provision, and are all marched by three o'clock this afternoon, though their notice was no longer ago than eight o'clock, Saturday. And now we have scarcely a man, but our regular guards, either in Weymouth, Hingham, Braintree, or Milton, and the militia from the more remote towns are called in as seacoast guards. Can you form to yourself an idea of our sensations ?

I have just returned from Penn's Hill, where I have been sitting to hear the amazing roar of cannon, and from whence I could see every shell which was thrown. The sound, I think, is one of the grandest in nature, and is of the true species of the sublime. 'Tis now an incessant roar; but O ! the fatal ideas, which are connected with the sound ! How many of our dear countrymen must fall !

Tuesday Morning.

I went to bed about twelve, and rose again a little after one. I could no more sleep, than if I had been in the engagement; the rattling of the windows, the jar of the house, the continual roar of twenty-four pounders, and the bursting of shells, give us such ideas, and realize a scene to us of which we could form scarcely any conception. About six, this morning, there was quiet. I rejoiced in a few hours' calm. I hear we got possession of Dorchester hill last night; four thousand men upon it to-day; lost but one man. The ships are all drawn round the town. To-night we shall realize a more terrible scene still. I sometimes think I cannot stand it. I wish myself with you, out of hearing, as I cannot assist them. I hope to give you joy of Boston, even if it is in ruins, before I send this away. I am too much agitated to write as I ought, and languid for want of rest.

Thursday. Fast-day.

All my anxiety and distress is at present at an end. I feel disappointed. This day our militia are all returning without effecting any thing more than taking possession of Dorchester hill. I hope it is wise and just, but, from all the muster and stir, I hoped and expected more important and decisive scenes. I would not have suffered all I have for two such hills. Ever since the taking of that, we have had a perfect calm: nor can I learn yet, what

effect it has had in Boston. I do not hear of one person's escaping since.

I was very much pleased with your choice of a committee for Canada. All those to whom I have ventured to show that part of your letter, approve the scheme of the priest, as a master-stroke of policy.¹ I feel sorry, that General Lee has left us, but his presence at New York was no doubt of great importance, as we have reason to think it prevented Clinton from landing and gathering together such a nest of vermin, as would at least have distressed us greatly. But how can you spare him from here? Can you make his place good? Can you supply it with a man equally qualified to save us? How do the Virginians relish the troops said to be destined for them? Are they putting themselves into a state of defence? I cannot bear to think of your continuing in a state of supineness this winter.

“ There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat;
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.”

¹ The members chosen on the committee were Dr. Franklin, Mr. Samuel Chase, and Mr. Charles Carroll, of Carrollton. At the same time it was “ Resolved, That Mr. Carroll be requested to prevail on Mr. John Carroll to accompany the committee to Canada, to assist them in such matters as they shall think useful.”—*Journal of Congress*, February 15th, 1776.

Sunday Evening.

I had scarcely finished these lines when my ears were again assaulted by the roar of cannon. I could not write any further. My hand and heart will tremble at this "domestic fury and fierce civil strife," which "cumber all" our "parts"; though "blood and destruction" are "so much in use," "and dreadful objects so familiar," yet is not "pity choked," nor my heart grown callous. I feel for the unhappy wretches, who know not where to fly for safety. I feel still more for my bleeding countrymen, who are hazarding their lives and their limbs. A most terrible and incessant cannonade from half after eight till six this morning. I hear we lost four men killed, and some wounded, in attempting to take the hill nearest the town, called Nook's Hill. We did some work, but the fire from the ships beat off our men, so that they did not secure it, but retired to the fort upon the other hill.

I have not got all the particulars; I wish I had; but, as I have an opportunity of sending this, I shall endeavour to be more particular in my next.

If there are reinforcements here, I believe we shall be driven from the seacoast; but, in whatever state I am, I will endeavour to be therewith content.

"Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long."

You will excuse this very incorrect letter. You see in what perturbation it has been written, and how many times I have left off. Adieu. Yours.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 7 April, 1776.

I HAVE received all the papers you sent, the oration and the magazines. In the small papers I sometimes find pieces begun and continued, (for instance, Johnston's speech,) but am so unlucky as not to get the papers in order, and miss of seeing the whole.

The removal of the army seems to have stopped the current of news. I want to know to what part of America they are now wandering. It is reported and credited, that Manly has taken a schooner belonging to the fleet, richly laden with money, plate, and English goods, with a number of Tories. The particulars I have not yet learned. Yesterday the remains of our worthy General Warren were dug up upon Bunker's hill, and carried into town, and on Monday are to be interred, with all the honors of war.

10 April.

The Doctor was buried on Monday; the masons walking in procession from the Statehouse, with the military in uniforms, and a large concourse of people attending. He was carried into the Chapel, and there a funeral dirge was played, an excellent prayer by Dr. Cooper, and an oration by Mr. Morton, which I hope will be printed. I think the subject must have inspired him. A young fellow could

not have wished a finer opportunity to display his talents. The amiable and heroic virtues of the deceased, recent in the minds of the audience; the noble cause to which he fell a martyr; their own sufferings and unparalleled injuries, all fresh in their minds, must have given weight and energy to whatever could be delivered upon the occasion. The dead body, like that of Cæsar, before their eyes, whilst each wound,

“like dumb mouths, did ope their ruby lips,
To beg the voice and utterance of a tongue.
Woe to the hands that shed this costly blood,
A curse shall light” upon their line.¹

11 April.

I take my pen and write just as I can get time; my letters will be a strange mixture. I really am “cumbered about many things,” and scarcely know which way to turn myself. I miss my partner, and find myself unequal to the cares which fall upon me. I find it necessary to be the directress of our husbandry. I hope in time to have the reputation of being as good a *farmeress*, as my partner has of being a good statesman. To ask you any thing about your return, would, I suppose, be asking a question which you cannot answer.

¹ The quotations from Shakspeare’s “Julius Cæsar,” so frequently to be met with in this and the preceding letter, betray as strongly the historical precedents to which the mind of the writer at this time inclined, as the signature which she assumed.

Retirement, rural quiet, domestic pleasures, all, all, must give place to the weighty cares of state. It would be

“meanly poor in solitude to hide
An honest zeal, unwarped by party rage.”

“Though certain pains attend the cares of state,
A good man owes his country to be great,
Should act abroad the high distinguished part,
And show, at least, the purpose of his heart.”

I hope your Prussian general¹ will answer the high character which is given of him. But we, who have been bred in a land of liberty, scarcely know how to give credit to so unjust and arbitrary a mandate of a despot. To cast off a faithful servant only for being the unhappy bearer of ill news, degrades the man, and dishonors the prince. The Congress, by employing him, have shown a liberality of sentiment, not confined to colonies or continents, but, to use the words of “Common Sense,” have “carried their friendship on a larger scale, by claiming brotherhood with every European Christian, and may justly triumph in the generosity of the sentiment.”

Yesterday, was taken and carried into Cohasset, by three whaleboats, who went from the shore on purpose, a snow from the Grenadas, laden with

¹ Probably the Baron de Woedtke, who was appointed by Congress a brigadier-general on the 16th of March, and ordered to Canada. He died shortly afterwards, at Lake George. — See Sparks's edition of “Washington's Writings,” Vol. IV. p. 6, *note*.

three hundred and fifty-four puncheons of West India rum, forty-three barrels of sugar, twelve thousand and five hundred weight of coffee ; a valuable prize. A number of Eastern sloops have brought wood into town since the fleet sailed. We have a rumor of Admiral Hopkins being engaged with a number of ships and tenders off Rhode Island ; and are anxious to know the event. Be so good as to send me a list of the vessels which sail with Hopkins, their names, weight of metal, and number of men ; all the news you know, &c.

I hear our jurors refuse to serve, because the writs are issued in the King's name. Surely, they are for independence.

Write me how you do this winter. I want to say many things I must omit. It is not fit "to wake the soul by tender strokes of art," or to ruminate upon happiness we might enjoy, lest absence become intolerable.

Adieu. Yours.

I wish you would burn all my letters.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 7 May, 1776.

How many are the solitary hours I spend, ruminating upon the past, and anticipating the future, whilst you, overwhelmed with the cares of state, have but a few moments you can devote to any individual.

All domestic pleasures and enjoyments are absorbed in the great and important duty you owe your country, "for our country is, as it were, a secondary god, and the first and greatest parent. It is to be preferred to parents, wives, children, friends, and all things, the gods only excepted; for, if our country perishes, it is as impossible to save an individual, as to preserve one of the fingers of a mortified hand." Thus do I suppress every wish, and silence every murmur, acquiescing in a painful separation from the companion of my youth, and the friend of my heart.

I believe 't is near ten days since I wrote you a line. I have not felt in a humor to entertain you if I had taken up my pen. Perhaps some unbecoming invective might have fallen from it. The eyes of our rulers have been closed, and a lethargy has seized almost every member. I fear a fatal security has taken possession of them. Whilst the building is in flames, they tremble at the expense of water to quench it. In short, two months have elapsed since the evacuation of Boston, and very little has been done in that time to secure it, or the harbour, from future invasion. The people are all in a flame, and no one among us, that I have heard of, even mentions expense. They think, universally, that there has been an amazing neglect somewhere. Many have turned out as volunteers to work upon Noddle's Island, and many more would go upon Nantasket, if the business was once set on foot. "'T is a maxim of state, that power and liberty are like heat and

moisture. Where they are well mixed, every thing prospers ; where they are single, they are destructive."

A government of more stability is much wanted in this colony, and they are ready to receive it from the hands of the Congress. And since I have begun with maxims of state, I will add another, namely, that a people may let a king fall, yet still remain a people ; but, if a king let his people slip from him, he is no longer a king. And as this is most certainly our case, why not proclaim to the world, in decisive terms, your own importance ?

Shall we not be despised by foreign powers, for hesitating so long at a word ?

I cannot say, that I think you are very generous to the ladies ; for, whilst you are proclaiming peace and good-will to men, emancipating all nations, you insist upon retaining an absolute power over wives. But you must remember, that arbitrary power is like most other things which are very hard, very liable to be broken ; and, notwithstanding all your wise laws and maxims, we have it in our power, not only to free ourselves, but to subdue our masters, and, without violence, throw both your natural and legal authority at our feet ; —

"Charm by accepting, by submitting sway,
Yet have our humor most when we obey."

I thank you for several letters which I have received since I wrote last ; they alleviate a tedious absence, and I long earnestly for a Saturday eve-

ning, and experience a similar pleasure to that which I used to find in the return of my friend upon that day after a week's absence. The idea of a year dissolves all my philosophy.

Our little ones, whom you so often recommend to my care and instruction, shall not be deficient in virtue or probity, if the precepts of a mother have their desired effect; but they would be doubly enforced, could they be indulged with the example of a father alternately before them. I often point them to their sire,

“engaged in a corrupted state,
Wrestling with vice and faction.”

9 May.

I designed to have finished the sheet, but, an opportunity offering, I close, only just informing you that, May the 7th, our privateers took two prizes in the bay, in fair sight of the man-of-war; one, a brig from Ireland; the other from Fayal, loaded with wine, brandy, &c.; the other with beef, &c. The wind was east, and a flood tide, so that the tenders could not get out, though they tried several times; the lighthouse fired signal guns, but all would not do. They took them in triumph, and carried them into Lynn.

Pray be kind enough to remember me at all times, and write, as often as you possibly can, to your

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Plymouth, 17 June, 1776, a remarkable day.

I THIS day received by the hands of our worthy friend, a large packet, which has refreshed and comforted me. Your own sensations have ever been similar to mine. I need not then tell you how gratified I am at the frequent tokens of remembrance with which you favor me, nor how they rouse every tender sensation of my soul, which sometimes will find vent at my eyes. Nor dare I describe how earnestly I long to fold to my fluttering heart the object of my warmest affections; the idea soothes me. I feast upon it with a pleasure known only to those whose hearts and hopes are one.

The approbation you give to my conduct in the management of our private affairs, is very grateful to me, and sufficiently compensates for all my anxieties and endeavours to discharge the many duties devolved upon me in consequence of the absence of my dearest friend. Were they discharged according to my wishes, I should merit the praises you bestow.

You see I date from Plymouth. I came upon a visit to our amiable friends, accompanied by my sister Betsey, a day or two ago. It is the first night I have been absent since you left me. Having determined upon this visit for some time, I put my family in order and prepared for it, thinking I might leave it with safety. Yet, the day I set out, I was under

many apprehensions, by the coming in of ten transports, who were seen to have many soldiers on board, and the determination of the people to go and fortify upon Long Island, Pettick's Island, Nantasket, and Great Hill. It was apprehended they would attempt to land somewhere, but the next morning I had the pleasure to hear they were all driven out, Commodore and all; not a transport, a ship, or a tender to be seen. This shows what might have been long ago done. Had this been done in season, the ten transports, with many others, in all probability would have fallen into our hands; but the progress of wisdom is slow.

Since I arrived here I have really had a scene quite novel to me. The brig *Defence*, from Connecticut, put in here for ballast. The officers, who are all from thence, and who are intimately acquainted at Dr. Lothrop's, invited his lady to come on board, and bring with her as many of her friends as she could collect. She sent an invitation to our friend, Mrs. Warren, and to us. The brig lay about a mile and a half from town. The officers sent their barge, and we went. Every mark of respect and attention which was in their power, they showed us. She is a fine brig, mounts sixteen guns, twelve swivels, and carries one hundred and twenty men. A hundred and seventeen were on board, and no private family ever appeared under better regulation than the crew. It was as still as though there had been only half a dozen; not a profane word among any of them. The captain himself is an exemplary

man ; (Harden his name) has been in nine sea engagements ; says if he gets a man who swears, and finds he cannot reform him, he turns him on shore, yet is free to confess, that it was the sin of his youth. He has one lieutenant, a very fine fellow, Smelden by name. We spent a very agreeable afternoon, and drank tea on board. They showed us their arms, which were sent by Queen Anne, and everything on board was a curiosity to me. They gave us a mock engagement with an enemy, and the manner of taking a ship. The young folks went upon the quarter deck and danced. Some of their Jacks played very well upon the violin and German flute. The brig bears the Continental colors, and was fitted out by the Colony of Connecticut. As we set off from the brig, they fired their guns in honor to us, a ceremony I would very readily have dispensed with.

I pity you, and feel for you under all the difficulties you have to encounter. My daily petitions to Heaven for you are, that you may have health, wisdom, and fortitude sufficient to carry you through the great and arduous business in which you are engaged, and that your endeavours may be crowned with success. Canada seems a dangerous and ill-fated place. It is reported here, that General Thomas is no more, that he took the smallpox, and died with it. Every day some circumstance arises, which shows me the importance of having the distemper in youth. Dr. Bulfinch has petitioned the General Court for leave to open a hospital somewhere, and

it will be granted him. I shall, with all the children, be one of the first class, you may depend upon it.

I have just this moment heard, that the brig, which I was on board of on Saturday, and which sailed yesterday morning from this place, fell in with two transports, having each of them a hundred and fifty men on board, and took them, and has brought them into Nantasket Roads, under cover of the guns which are mounted there. I will add further particulars as soon as I am informed.

I am now better informed, and will give you the truth. The brig *Defence*, accompanied by a small privateer, sailed in concert Sunday morning. About twelve o'clock they discovered two transports, and made for them. Two privateers, which were small, had been in chase of them, but finding the enemy was of much larger force, had run under Cohasset rocks. The *Defence* gave a signal gun to bring them out. Captain Burk, who accompanied the *Defence*, being a prime sailer, he came up first, and poured a broadside on board a sixteen gun brig. The *Defence* soon attacked her upon her bows. An obstinate engagement ensued. There was a continual blaze upon all sides for many hours, and it was near midnight before they struck. In the engagement, the *Defence* lost one man, and five wounded. With Burk, not one man received any damage; on board the enemy, fourteen killed, among whom was a major, and sixty wounded. They are part of the Highland soldiers. The other transport mounted six guns. When the fleet sailed out of this

harbor last week, they blew up the lighthouse. They met six transports coming in, which they carried off with them. I hope we shall soon be in such a posture of defence, as to bid them defiance.

I feel no great anxiety at the large armament designed against us. The remarkable interpositions of Heaven in our favor cannot be too gratefully acknowledged. He who fed the Israelites in the wilderness, "who clothes the lilies of the field, and feeds the young ravens when they cry," will not forsake a people engaged in so righteous a cause, if we remember his loving-kindness. We wanted powder, — we have a supply. We wanted arms, — we have been favored in that respect. We wanted hard money, — twenty-two thousand dollars, and an equal value in plate, are delivered into our hands.

You mention your peas, your cherries, and your strawberries, &c. Ours are but just in blossom. We have had the coldest spring I ever knew. Things are three weeks behind what they generally used to be. The corn looks poor. The season now is rather dry. I believe I did not understand you, when in a former letter you said, "I want to resign my office, for a thousand reasons." If you mean that of judge, I know not what to say. I know it will be a difficult and arduous station; but, divesting myself of private interest, which would lead me to be against your holding that office, I know of no person who is so well calculated to discharge the trust, or who I think would act a more conscientious part.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

29 September, 1776.

Not since the 5th of September, have I had one line from you, which makes me very uneasy. Are you all this time conferring with his Lordship?¹ Is there no communication? or, are the post-riders all dismissed? Let the cause be what it will, not hearing from you has given me much uneasiness.

We seem to be kept in total ignorance of affairs at York. I hope you at Congress are more enlightened. Who fell, who are wounded, who prisoners or their number, is as undetermined as it was the day after the battle.² If our army is in ever so critical a state I wish to know it, and the worst of it. If all America is to be ruined and undone by a pack of cowards and knaves, I wish to know it. Pitiabie is the lot of their commander. Cæsar's tenth legion never was forgiven. We are told for truth, that a regiment of Yorkers refused to quit the city; and, that another regiment behaved like a pack of cowardly villains by quitting their posts. If they are unjustly censured, it is for want of proper intelligence.

¹ Dr. Franklin, Mr. John Adams, and Mr. Rutledge, were elected a Committee on the part of Congress, to confer with Lord Howe, respecting his powers to treat. — *Journals of Congress*, September 6th, 1776.

² On Long Island.

I am sorry to see a spirit so venal prevailing everywhere. When our men were drawn out for Canada, a very large bounty was given them ; and now another call is made upon us ; no one will go without a large bounty, though only for two months, and each town seems to think its honor engaged in outbidding the others. The province pay is forty shillings. In addition to that, this town voted to make it up six pounds. They then drew out the persons most unlikely to go, and they are obliged to give three pounds to hire a man. Some pay the whole fine, ten pounds. Forty men are now drafted from this town. More than one half, from sixteen to fifty, are now in the service. This method of conducting will create a general uneasiness in the Continental army. I hardly think you can be sensible how much we are thinned in this province.

The rage for privateering is as great here as anywhere. Vast numbers are employed in that way. If it is necessary to make any more drafts upon us, the women must reap the harvests. I am willing to do my part. I believe I could gather corn, and husk it ; but I should make a poor figure at digging potatoes.

There has been a report, that a fleet was seen in our bay yesterday. I cannot conceive from whence, nor do I believe the story.

'Tis said you have been upon Staten Island to hold your conference. 'Tis a little odd, that I have never received the least intimation of it from you. Did you think I should be alarmed ? Don't you

know me better than to think me a coward? I hope you will write me every thing concerning this affair. I have a great curiosity to know the result.

As to government, nothing is yet done about it. The Church is opened here every Sunday, and the King prayed for, as usual, in open defiance of Congress.

If the next post does not bring me a letter, I think I will leave off writing, for I shall not believe you get mine.

Adieu. Yours, ———.

P. S. Master John has become post-rider from Boston to Braintree.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

30 July, 1777.

I DARE say, before this time you have interpreted the Northern Storm. If the presages chilled your blood, how must you be frozen and stiffened at the disgrace brought upon our arms! ¹ unless some warmer passion seize you, and anger and resentment fire your breast. How are all our vast magazines of cannon, powder, arms, clothing, provision, medicine, &c., to be restored to us? But, what is vastly more, how shall the disgrace be wiped away? How shall our

¹ The evacuation of Ticonderoga and Mount Independence, by General St. Clair.

lost honor be retrieved? The reports with regard to that fortress are very vague and uncertain. Some write from thence, that there was not force sufficient to defend it. Others say it might have stood a long siege. Some there are, who ought to know why and wherefore we have given away a place of such importance.

That the inquiry will be made, I make no doubt; and, if cowardice, guilt, deceit, are found upon any one, howsoever high or exalted his station, may shame, reproach, infamy, hatred, and the execrations of the public, be his portion.

I would not be so narrow-minded, as to suppose, that there are not many men of all nations, possessed of honor, virtue, and integrity; yet, it is to be lamented, that we have not men among ourselves, sufficiently qualified for war, to take upon them the most important command.

It was customary among the Carthaginians, to have a military school, in which the flower of their nobility, and those whose talents and ambition prompted them to aspire to the first dignities, learned the art of war. From among these, they selected all their general officers; for, though they employed mercenary soldiers, they were too jealous and suspicious to employ foreign generals. Will a foreigner, whose interest is not naturally connected with ours (any otherwise than as the cause of liberty is the cause of all mankind), will he act with the same zeal, or expose himself to equal dangers, with the same resolution, for a republic of which he is not a

member, as he would have done for his own native country? And can the people repose an equal confidence in them, even supposing them men of integrity and abilities, and that they meet with success equal to their abilities? How much envy and malice are employed against them! And how galling to pride, how mortifying to human nature, to see itself excelled.

31 July.

I have nothing new to entertain you with, unless it is an account of a new set of mobility, which has lately taken the lead in Boston. You must know that there is a great scarcity of sugar and coffee, articles which the female part of the state is very loth to give up, especially whilst they consider the scarcity occasioned by the merchants having secreted a large quantity. There had been much rout and noise in the town for several weeks. Some stores had been opened by a number of people, and the coffee and sugar carried into the market, and dealt out by pounds. It was rumored that an eminent, wealthy, stingy merchant¹ (who is a bachelor) had a hogshead of coffee in his store, which he refused to sell to the committee under six shillings per pound. A number of females, some say a hundred, some say more, assembled with a cart and trucks, marched down to the warehouse, and demanded the

¹ Said to have been Thomas Boylston, who afterwards left this country and settled in London.

keys, which he refused to deliver. Upon which, one of them seized him by his neck, and tossed him into the cart. Upon his finding no quarter, he delivered the keys, when they tipped up the cart and discharged him; then opened the warehouse, hoisted out the coffee themselves, put it into the truck, and drove off.

It was reported, that he had personal chastisement among them; but this, I believe, was not true. A large concourse of men stood amazed, silent spectators of the whole transaction.

Adieu. Your good mother is just come; she desires to be remembered to you; so do my father and sister, who have just left me, and so does she, whose greatest happiness consists in being tenderly beloved by her absent friend, and who subscribes herself ever his

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

5 August, 1777.

If alarming half a dozen places at the same time is an act of generalship, Howe may boast of his late conduct. We have never, since the evacuation of Boston, been under apprehensions of an invasion from them, equal to what we suffered last week. All Boston was in confusion, packing up and carting out of town household furniture, military stores,

goods, &c. Not less than a thousand teams were employed on Friday and Saturday ; and, to their shame be it told, not a small trunk would they carry under eight dollars, and many of them, I am told, asked a hundred dollars a load ; for carting a hogshead of molasses eight miles, thirty dollars. O human nature ! or rather, O inhuman nature ! what art thou ? The report of the fleet's being seen off Cape Ann Friday night gave me the alarm, and, though pretty weak, I set about packing up my things, and on Saturday removed a load.

When I looked around me and beheld the bounties of Heaven so liberally bestowed, in fine fields of corn, grass, flax, and English grain, and thought it might soon become a prey to these merciless ravagers, our habitations laid waste, and, if our flight preserved our lives, we must return to barren fields, empty barns, and desolate habitations, if any we find, (perhaps not where to lay our heads,) my heart was too full to bear the weight of affliction which I thought just ready to overtake us, and my body too weak almost to bear the shock, unsupported by my better half.

But, thanks be to Heaven, we are at present relieved from our fears respecting ourselves. I now feel anxious for your safety, but hope prudence will direct to a proper care and attention to yourselves. May this second attempt of Howe's prove his utter ruin. May destruction overtake him as a whirlwind.

We have a report of an engagement at the northward, in which our troops behaved well, drove the

enemy into their lines, killed and took three hundred and fifty prisoners. The account came in last night. I have not particulars. We are under apprehensions that the *Hancock* is taken.

Your obliging letters of the 8th, 10th, and 13th, came to hand last week. I hope before this time you are relieved from the anxiety you express for your bosom friend. I feel my sufferings amply rewarded, in the tenderness you express for me. But, in one of your letters, you have drawn a picture which drew a flood of tears from my eyes, and wrung my heart with anguish inexpressible. I pray Heaven, I may not live to realize it.

It is almost thirteen years since we were united, but not more than half that time have we had the happiness of living together. The unfeeling world may consider it in what light they please. I consider it as a sacrifice to my country, and one of my greatest misfortunes, to be separated from my children, at a time of life when the joint instructions and admonition of parents sink deeper than in maturer years.

The hope of the smiles and approbation of my friend sweetens all my toils and labors.

“ Ye Powers, whom men and birds obey,
Great rulers of your creatures, say
Why mourning comes, by bliss conveyed,
And even the sweets of love allayed.
Where grows enjoyment tall and fair,
Around it twines entangling care ;

While fear for what our sons possess
Enervates every power to bless.
Yet friendship forms the bliss above,
And, life, what art thou without love ?”

TO JOHN ADAMS.

17 September, 1777.

I HAVE to acknowledge a feast of letters from you since I wrote last ; their dates from August 19th to September 1st. It is a very great satisfaction to me to know from day to day the movement of Howe and his banditti. We live in hourly expectation of important intelligence from both armies. Heaven grant us victory and peace ; two blessings, I fear, we are very undeserving of.

Enclosed you will find a letter to Mr. Lovell,¹ who was so obliging as to send me a plan of that part of the country, which is like to be the present seat of war. He accompanied it with a very polite letter, and I esteem myself much obliged to him ; but there is no reward this side the grave that would be a temptation to me to undergo the agitation and distress I was thrown into by receiving a letter in his handwriting, franked by him. It seems almost impossible, that the human mind could take in, in so

¹ James Lovell ; at this time, and for several years after, a delegate from Massachusetts to the General Congress.

small a space of time, so many ideas as rushed upon mine in the space of a moment. I cannot describe to you what I felt.

The sickness or death of the dearest of friends, with ten thousand horrors, seized my imagination. I took up the letter, then laid it down, then gave it out of my hand unable to open it, then collected resolution enough to unseal it, but dared not read it; began at the bottom, — read a line, — then attempted to begin it, but could not. A paper was enclosed, I ventured upon that, and, finding it a plan, recovered enough to read the letter; but I pray Heaven, I may never realize such another moment of distress.

I designed to have written you a long letter, for really I owe you one, but have been prevented by our worthy Plymouth friends, who are here upon a visit, in their way home; and it is now so late at night, just struck twelve, that I will defer any thing further till the next post. Good night, friend of my heart, companion of my youth, husband, and lover. Angels watch thy repose!

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Boston, 25 October, 1777.

THE joyful news of the surrender of General Burgoyne and all his army, to our victorious troops, prompted me to take a ride this afternoon with my daughter to town, to join, to-morrow, with my friends

in thanksgiving and praise to the Supreme Being, who hath so remarkably delivered our enemies into our hands. And, hearing that an express is to go off to-morrow morning, I have retired to write you a few lines. I have received no letters from you since you left Philadelphia¹ by the post, and but one by any private hand.

Burgoyne is expected in by the middle of the week. I have read many articles of capitulation, but none which ever before contained so generous terms. Many people find fault with them, but perhaps do not consider sufficiently the circumstances of General Gates, who, by delaying and exacting more, might have lost all. This must be said of him, that he has followed the golden rule, and done as he would wish himself, in like circumstances, to be dealt with. Must not the vaporing Burgoyne, who, it is said, possesses great sensibility, be humbled to the dust? He may now write the Blockade of Saratoga. I have heard it proposed, that he should take up his quarters in the Old South, but believe he will not be permitted to come to this town. Heaven grant us success at the southward. That saying of Poor Richard often occurs to my mind, 'God helps them who help themselves;' but, if men turn their backs and run from an enemy, they cannot surely expect to conquer him.

This day, dearest of friends, completes thirteen years since we were solemnly united in wedlock.

¹ For Yorktown, whither the Congress had adjourned.

Three years of this time we have been cruelly separated. I have, patiently as I could, endured it, with the belief that you were serving your country, and rendering your fellow creatures essential benefits. May future generations rise up and call you blessed, and the present behave worthy of the blessings you are laboring to secure to them, and I shall have less reason to regret the deprivation of my own particular felicity.

Adieu, dearest of friends, adieu.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

8 March, 1778.

'T is a little more than three weeks since the dearest of friends and tenderest of husbands left¹ his solitary partner, and quitted all the fond endearments of domestic felicity for the dangers of the sea, exposed, perhaps, to the attack of a hostile foe, and, O good Heaven! can I add, to the dark assassin, to the secret murderer, and the bloody emissary of as cruel a tyrant as God, in his righteous judgments, ever suffered to disgrace the throne of Britain.

I have travelled with you over the wide Atlantic, and could have landed you safe, with humble confidence, at your desired haven, and then have set myself down to enjoy a negative kind of happiness,

¹ Mr. Adams, with his eldest son, sailed for France in the frigate Boston in February of this year.

in the painful part which it has pleased Heaven to allot me ; but the intelligence with regard to that great philosopher, able statesman, and unshaken friend of his country,¹ has planted a dagger in my breast, and I feel, with a double edge, the weapon that pierced the bosom of a Franklin.

“ For nought avail the virtues of the heart,
Nor towering genius claims its due reward ;
From Britain's fury, as from death's keen dart,
No worth can save us, and no fame can guard.”

The more distinguished the person, the greater the inveteracy of these foes of human nature. The argument of my friends to alleviate my anxiety, by persuading me that this shocking attempt will put you more upon your guard and render your person more secure than if it had never taken place, is kind in them, and has some weight ; but my greatest comfort and consolation arise from the belief of a superintending Providence to whom I can, with confidence, commit you, since not a sparrow falls to the ground without his notice. Were it not for this, I should be miserable and overwhelmed by my fears and apprehensions.

Freedom of sentiment, the life and soul of friendship, is in a great measure cut off by the danger of miscarriage, and the apprehension of letters falling into the hands of our enemies. Should this meet with that fate, may they blush for their connexion

¹ An unfounded rumor of the assassination of Dr. Franklin in Paris.

with a nation who have rendered themselves infamous and abhorred, by a long list of crimes, which not their high achievements, nor the lustre of former deeds, nor the tender appellation of parent, nor the fond connexion which once subsisted, can ever blot from our remembrance, nor wipe out those indelible stains of their cruelty and baseness. They have engraven them with a pen of iron on a rock for ever.

To my dear son remember me in the most affectionate terms. I would have written to him, but my notice is so short that I have not time. Enjoin it upon him never to disgrace his mother, and to behave worthily of his father. Tender as maternal affection is, it was swallowed up in what I found a stronger, or so intermixed that I felt it not in its full force till after he had left me. I console myself with the hopes of his reaping advantages under the careful eye of a tender parent, which it was not in my power to bestow upon him.

There has nothing material taken place in the political world since you left us. This letter will go by a vessel for Bilboa, from whence you may, perhaps, get better opportunities of conveyance than from any other place. The letter you delivered to the pilot came safe to hand. All the little folks are anxious for the safety of their papa and brother, to whom they desire to be remembered; to which is added the tenderest sentiments of affection, and the fervent prayers for your happiness and safety, of your

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PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

18 May, 1778.

I HAVE waited with great patience, restraining, as much as possible, every anxious idea for three months. But now every vessel which arrives sets my expectation upon the wing, and I pray my guardian genius to waft me the happy tidings of your safety and welfare. Hitherto my wandering ideas have roved, like the son of Ulysses, from sea to sea, and from shore to shore, not knowing where to find you; sometimes I fancied you upon the mighty waters, — sometimes at your desired haven, — sometimes upon the ungrateful and hostile shore of Britain, — but at all times, and in all places, under the protecting care and guardianship of that Being, who not only clothes the lilies of the field, and hears the young ravens when they cry, but hath said, “Of how much more worth are ye than many sparrows;” and this confidence, which the world cannot deprive me of, is my food by day, and my rest by night, and was all my consolation under the horrid ideas of assassination, — the only event of which I had not thought, and, in some measure, prepared my mind.

When my imagination sets you down upon the Gallic shore, a land to which Americans are now bound to transfer their affections, and to eradicate all those national prejudices, which the proud and haughty nation, whom we once revered, craftily in-

stilled into us, whom they once styled their children, I anticipate the pleasure you must feel, and, though so many leagues distant, share in the joy of finding the great interest of our country so generously espoused and nobly aided by so powerful a monarch. Your prospects must be much brightened ; for, when you left your native land, they were rather gloomy. If an unwearied zeal and persevering attachment to the cause of truth and justice, regardless of the allurements of ambition on the one hand, or the threats of calamity on the other, can entitle any one to the reward of peace, liberty, and safety, a large portion of those blessings are reserved for my friend in his native land.

“ O ! wouldst thou keep thy country's loud applause,
Loved as her father, as her God adored,
Be still the bold asserter of her cause,
Her voice in council ; (in the fight her sword ;)
In peace, in war, pursue thy country's good,
For her, bare thy bold breast and pour thy generous blood.”

Difficult as the day is, cruel as this war has been, separated as I am, on account of it, from the dearest connexion in life, I would not exchange my country for the wealth of the Indies, or be any other than an American, though I might be queen or empress of any nation upon the globe. My soul is unambitious of pomp or power. Beneath my humble roof, blessed with the society and tenderest affection of my dear partner, I have enjoyed as much felicity and as exquisite happiness, as falls to the share of mortals.

And, though I have been called to sacrifice to my country, I can glory in my sacrifice and derive pleasure from my intimate connexion with one, who is esteemed worthy of the important trust devolved upon him.

Britain, as usual, has added insult to injustice and cruelty, by what she calls a conciliatory plan. From my soul I despise her meanness; but she has long ago lost that treasure, which, a great authority tells us, exalteth a nation, and is receiving the reproaches due to her crimes. I have been much gratified with the perusal of the Duke of Richmond's speech. Were there ten such men to be found, I should still have some hopes, that a revolution would take place in favor of the virtuous few, "and the laws, the rights, the generous plan of power delivered down from age to age by our renowned forefathers," be again restored to that unhappy island.

Our public finances are upon no better footing than they were when you left us. Five hundred dollars is now offered by this town, per man, for nine months, to recruit the army. Twelve pounds a month for farming labor is the price, and it is not to be procured under. Our friends are all well and desire to be remembered to you. So many tender sentiments rush upon my mind, when about to close this letter to you, that I can only ask you to measure them by those which you find in your own bosom for

Your affectionate

PORTI

TO JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

June, 1778.

MY DEAR SON,

'T is almost four months since you left your native land, and embarked upon the mighty waters, in quest of a foreign country. Although I have not particularly written to you since, yet you may be assured you have constantly been upon my heart and mind.

It is a very difficult task, my dear son, for a tender parent to bring her mind to part with a child of your years going to a distant land; nor could I have acquiesced in such a separation under any other care than that of the most excellent parent and guardian who accompanied you. You have arrived at years capable of improving under the advantages you will be likely to have, if you do but properly attend to them. They are talents put into your hands, of which an account will be required of you hereafter; and, being possessed of one, two, or four, see to it that you double your numbers.

The most amiable and most useful disposition in a young mind is diffidence of itself; and this should lead you to seek advice and instruction from him, who is your natural guardian, and will always counsel and direct you in the best manner, both for your present and future happiness. You are in possession of a natural good understanding, and of spirits unbroken by adversity and untamed with care. Im-

prove your understanding by acquiring useful knowledge and virtue, such as will render you an ornament to society, an honor to your country, and a blessing to your parents. Great learning and superior abilities, should you ever possess them, will be of little value and small estimation, unless virtue, honor, truth, and integrity are added to them. Adhere to those religious sentiments and principles which were early instilled into your mind, and remember, that you are accountable to your Maker for all your words and actions.

Let me enjoin it upon you to attend constantly and steadfastly to the precepts and instructions of your father, as you value the happiness of your mother and your own welfare. His care and attention to you render many things unnecessary for me to write, which I might otherwise do; but the inadvertency and heedlessness of youth require line upon line and precept upon precept, and, when enforced by the joint efforts of both parents, will, I hope, have a due influence upon your conduct; for, dear as you are to me, I would much rather you should have found your grave in the ocean you have crossed, or that any untimely death crop you in your infant years, than see you an immoral, profligate, or graceless child.

You have entered early in life upon the great theatre of the world, which is full of temptations and vice of every kind. You are not wholly unacquainted with history, in which you have read of crimes which your inexperienced mind could scarcely

believe credible. You have been taught to think of them with horror, and to view vice as

“a monster of so frightful mien,
That, to be hated, needs but to be seen.”

Yet you must keep a strict guard upon yourself, or the odious monster will soon lose its terror by becoming familiar to you. The modern history of our own times, furnishes as black a list of crimes, as can be paralleled in ancient times, even if we go back to Nero, Caligula, or Cæsar Borgia. Young as you are, the cruel war, into which we have been compelled by the haughty tyrant of Britain and the bloody emissaries of his vengeance, may stamp upon your mind this certain truth, that the welfare and prosperity of all countries, communities, and, I may add, individuals, depend upon their morals. That nation to which we were once united, as it has departed from justice, eluded and subverted the wise laws which formerly governed it, and suffered the worst of crimes to go unpunished, has lost its valor, wisdom, and humanity, and, from being the dread and terror of Europe, has sunk into derision and infamy.

But, to quit political subjects, I have been greatly anxious for your safety, having never heard of the frigate since she sailed, till, about a week ago, a New York paper informed, that she was taken and carried into Plymouth. I did not fully credit this report, though it gave me much uneasiness. I yesterday heard that a French vessel was arrived at Portsmouth, which brought news of the safe arrival

of the *Boston* ; but this wants confirmation. I hope it will not be long before I shall be assured of your safety. You must write me an account of your voyage, of your situation, and of every thing entertaining you can recollect.

Be assured I am most affectionately yours,

TO JOHN ADAMS.

30 June, 1778.

DEAREST OF FRIENDS,

SHALL I tell my dearest, that tears of joy filled my eyes this morning at the sight of his well-known hand? — the first line which has blessed my sight, since his four months' absence, during which time I have never been able to learn a word from him or my dear son, till, about ten days ago, an English paper, taken in a prize and brought into Salem, contained an account, under the Paris news, of your arrival at the abode of Dr. Franklin ; and, last week, a cartel, from Halifax, brought Captain Welch, of the *Boston*, who informed that he left you well the 11th of March, and that he had letters for me, but destroyed them when he was taken ; and this is all the information I have ever been able to obtain. Our enemies have told us the vessel was taken, and named the

frigate which took her, and that she was carried into Plymouth. I have lived a life of fear and anxiety ever since you left me. Not more than a week after your absence, the horrid story of Dr. Franklin's assassination was received from France, and sent by Mr. Purveyance, of Baltimore, to Congress and to Boston. Near two months, before that was contradicted. Then we could not hear a word from the *Boston*, and most people gave her up, as taken or lost. Thus has my mind been agitated like a troubled sea.

You will easily conceive, how grateful your favor of April 25th, and those of our son, were to me and mine ; though I regret your short warning, and the little time you had to write, by which means I know not how you fared upon your voyage, what reception you have met with (not even from the ladies, though you profess yourself an admirer of them) and a thousand circumstances which I wish to know, and which are always particularly interesting to near connexions. I must request you always to be minute, and to write me by every conveyance. Some, perhaps, which may appear unlikely to reach me, will be the first to arrive. I own I was mortified at so short a letter, but I quiet my heart with thinking there are many more upon their passage to me. I have written several before this, and some of them very long.

Now I know you are safe, I wish myself with you. Whenever you entertain such a wish, recollect that I would have willingly hazarded all dangers to

have been your companion ; but, as that was not permitted, you must console me in your absence, by a recital of all your adventures ; though, methinks, I would not have them in all respects too similar to those related of your venerable colleague, whose Mentor-like appearance, age, and philosophy most certainly lead the politico-scientific ladies of France to suppose they are embracing the god of wisdom in a human form ; but I, who own that I never yet “ wished an angel, whom I loved a man,” shall be full as content if those divine honors are omitted. The whole heart of my friend is in the bosom of his partner. More than half a score of years have so riveted it there, that the fabric which contains it must crumble into dust, ere the particles can be separated. I can hear of the brilliant accomplishments of any of my sex with pleasure, and rejoice in that liberality of sentiment which acknowledges them. At the same time, I regret the trifling, narrow, contracted education of the females of my own country. I have entertained a superior opinion of the accomplishments of the French ladies, ever since I read the letters of Dr. Shebbeare, who professes that he had rather take the opinion of an accomplished lady, in matters of polite writing, than the first wits of Italy ; and should think himself safer, with her approbation, than with that of a long list of literati ; and he gives this reason for it, that women have, in general, more delicate sensations than men ; what touches them, is for the most part true in nature, whereas men, warped by education, judge amiss

from previous prejudice, and, referring all things to the mode of the ancients, condemn that by comparison, where no true similitude ought to be expected.

But, in this country, you need not be told how much female education is neglected, nor how fashionable it has been to ridicule female learning; though I acknowledge it my happiness to be connected with a person of a more generous mind and liberal sentiments. I cannot forbear transcribing a few generous sentiments which I lately met with upon this subject.

“If women,” says the writer, “are to be esteemed our enemies, methinks it is an ignoble cowardice, thus to disarm them, and not allow them the same weapons we use ourselves; but, if they deserve the title of our friends, ’t is an inhuman tyranny to debar them of the privileges of ingenuous education, which would also render their friendship so much the more delightful to themselves and us. Nature is seldom observed to be niggardly of her choicest gifts to the sex. Their senses are generally as quick as ours; their reason as nervous, their judgment as mature and solid. To these natural perfections add but the advantages of acquired learning, what polite and charming creatures would they prove; whilst their external beauty does the office of a crystal to the lamp, not shrouding, but disclosing, their brighter intellects. Nor need we fear to lose our empire over them by thus improving their native abilities; since, where there is most learning, sense, and knowledge,

there is always observed to be the most modesty and rectitude of manners.”¹

TO JOHN ADAMS.²

THE morning after I received your very short letter, I determined to devote the day to writing to my friend; but I had only just breakfasted, when I had a visit from Monsieur Rivière, an officer on board the *Languedoc*, who speaks English well, the captain of the *Zara*, and six or eight other officers, from on board another ship. The first gentleman dined with me, and spent the day, so that I had no opportunity of writing that day. The gentlemen officers have made me several visits, and I have dined twice on board, at very elegant entertainments. Count d’Estaing has been exceedingly polite to me. Soon after he arrived here, I received a message from him, requesting that I would meet him at Colonel Quincy’s, as it was inconvenient leaving his ship for any long time. I waited upon him, and was very politely received. Upon parting, he requested that

¹ This letter probably failed in reaching its destination. The rough copy only remains, which ends in an abrupt manner, with the quotation as above.

² This is taken from a rough draft; the original letter, if it was ever sent, was probably captured by the enemy or sunk. It is without date, but the contents fix it in October, 1778.

the family would accompany me on board his ship and dine with him the next Thursday, with any friends we chose to bring; and his barge should come for us. We went, according to the invitation, and were sumptuously entertained, with every delicacy that this country produces, and the addition of every foreign article that could render our feast splendid. Music and dancing for the young folks closed the day.

The temperance of these gentlemen, the peaceable, quiet disposition both of officers and men, joined to many other virtues which they have exhibited during their continuance with us, are sufficient to make Europeans, and Americans too, blush at their own degeneracy of manners. Not one officer has been seen the least disguised with liquor since their arrival. Most that I have seen, appear to be gentlemen of family and education. I have been the more desirous to take notice of them, as I cannot help saying, that they have been neglected in the town of Boston. Generals Heath and Hancock have done their part, but very few, if any, private families have any acquaintance with them. Perhaps I feel more anxious to have them distinguished, on account of the near and dear connexions I have among them. It would gratify me much, if I had it in my power, to entertain every officer in the fleet.

In the very few lines I have received from you, not the least mention is made, that you have ever received a line from me. I have not been so parsimonious as my friend, — perhaps I am not so prudent ;

but I cannot take my pen, with my heart overflowing, and not give utterance to some of the abundance which is in it. Could you, after a thousand fears and anxieties, long expectation, and painful suspense, be satisfied with my telling you, that I was well, that I wished you were with me, that my daughter sent her duty, that I had ordered some articles for you, which I hoped would arrive, &c. &c. ? By Heaven, if you could, you have changed hearts with some frozen Laplander, or made a voyage to a region that has chilled every drop of your blood ; but I will restrain a pen already, I fear, too rash, nor shall it tell you how much I have suffered from this appearance of — inattention.

The articles sent by Captain Tucker have arrived safe, and will be of great service to me. Our money is very little better than blank paper. It takes forty dollars to purchase a barrel of cider ; fifty pounds lawful for a hundred of sugar, and fifty dollars for a hundred of flour ; four dollars per day for a laborer, and find him, which will amount to four more. You will see, by bills drawn before the date of this, that I had taken the method which I was happy in finding you had directed me to. I shall draw for the rest as I find my situation requires. No article that can be named, foreign or domestic, but what costs more than double in hard money what it once sold for. In one letter I have given you an account of our local situation, and of *every thing* I thought you might wish to know. Four or five sheets of paper, written to you by the last mail, were de-

stroyed when the vessel was taken. Duplicates are my aversion, though I believe I should set a value upon them, if I were to receive them from a certain friend¹; a friend who never was deficient in testifying his regard and affection to his

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Sunday Evening, 27 December, 1778.

How lonely are my days? how solitary are my nights? secluded from all society but my two little boys and my domestics. By the mountains of snow which surround me, I could almost fancy myself in Greenland. We have had four of the coldest days I ever knew, and they were followed by the severest snow-storm I ever remember. The wind, blowing like a hurricane for fifteen or twenty hours, rendered it impossible for man or beast to live abroad, and has blocked up the roads so that they are impassable. A week ago I parted with my daughter, at the request of our Plymouth friends, to spend a month with them; so that I am solitary indeed.

Can the best of friends recollect, that for fourteen years past I have not spent a whole winter alone. Some part of the dismal season has heretofore been

¹ It is proper to remark here, that the inattention which called forth these complaints was only apparent, and caused by the capture of nearly all the vessels which brought letters.

mitigated and softened by the social converse and participation of the friend of my youth.

How insupportable the idea, that three thousand miles and the vast ocean now divide us ! but divide only our persons, for the heart of my friend is in the bosom of his partner. More than half a score of years has so riveted it there, that the fabric which contains it must crumble into dust ere the particles can be separated ; for

“ in one fate, our hearts, our fortunes,
And our beings blend.”

I cannot describe to you how much I was affected the other day with a Scotch song, which was sung to me by a young lady in order to divert a melancholy hour ; but it had quite a different effect, and the native simplicity of it had all the power of a well-wrought tragedy. When I could conquer my sensibility I begged the song, and Master Charles has learned it, and consoles his mamma by singing it to her. I will enclose it to you. It has beauties in it to me, which an indifferent person would not feel perhaps.

“ His very foot has music in 't,
As he comes up the stairs.”

How oft has my heart danced to the sound of that music ?

“ And shall I see his face again ?
And shall I hear him speak ? ”

Gracious Heaven! hear and answer my daily petition, by banishing all my grief.

I am sometimes quite discouraged from writing. So many vessels are taken, that there is little chance of a letter's reaching your hands. That I meet with so few returns, is a circumstance that lies heavy at my heart. If this finds its way to you, it will go by the *Alliance*. By her I have written before. She has not yet sailed, and I love to amuse myself with my pen, and pour out some of the tender sentiments of a heart overflowing with affection, not for the eye of a cruel enemy, who, no doubt, would ridicule every humane and social sentiment, long ago grown callous to the finer sensibilities, but for the sympathetic heart that beats in unison with

PORTIA'S.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

20 March, 1779.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

YOUR favor of December 9th, came to hand this evening from Philadelphia. By the same post I received a letter from Mr. Lovell, transcribing some passages from one of the same date to him, and the only one, he says, which he has received since your absence, and his pocket book proves, that he has written eighteen different times; yet possibly you may have received as few from him. The watery world alone can boast of large packets received; — a

discouraging thought when I take my pen. Yet I will not be discouraged. I will persist in writing, though but one in ten should reach you. I have been impatient for an opportunity, none having offered since January, when the *Alliance* sailed, which, my presaging mind assures me, will arrive safe in France, and I hope will return as safely.

Accept my thanks for the care you take of me, in so kindly providing for me the articles you mention. Should they arrive safe, they will be a great assistance to me. The safest way, you tell me, of supplying my wants, is by drafts; but I cannot get hard money for bills. You had as good tell me to procure diamonds for them; and, when bills will fetch but five for one, hard money will exchange ten, which I think is very provoking; and I must give at the rate of ten, and sometimes twenty, for one, for every article I purchase. I blush whilst I give you a price current; — all butcher's meat from a dollar to eight shillings per pound; corn twenty-five dollars, rye thirty, per bushel; flour fifty pounds per hundred; potatoes ten dollars per bushel; butter twelve shillings a pound, cheese eight; sugar twelve shillings a pound; molasses twelve dollars per gallon; labor six and eight dollars a day; a common cow, from sixty to seventy pounds; and all English goods in proportion. This is our present situation. It is a risk to send me any thing across the water, I know; yet, if one in three arrives, I should be a gainer. I have studied, and do study, every method of economy in my power; otherwise a mint of money would not

support a family. I could not board our two sons under forty dollars per week apiece at a school. I therefore thought it most prudent to request Mr. Thaxter to look after them, giving him his board and the use of the office, which he readily accepted, and, having passed the winter with me, will continue through the summer, as I see no probability of the times speedily growing better.

We have had much talk of peace through the mediation of Spain, and great news from Spain, and a thousand reports, as various as the persons who tell them; yet I believe slowly, and rely more upon the information of my friend, than on all the whole legion of stories which rise with the sun, and set as soon. Respecting Georgia,¹ other friends have written you. I shall add nothing of my own, but that I believe it will finally be a fortunate event to us.

Our vessels have been fortunate in making prizes, though many were taken in the fall of the year. We have been greatly distressed for [want of] grain. I scarcely know the looks or taste of biscuit or flour for this four months; yet thousands have been much worse off, having no grain of any sort.

The great commotion raised here by Mr. Deane has sunk into contempt for his character; and it would be better for him to leave a country, which is now supposed to have been injured by him. His friends are silent, not knowing how to extricate him.

¹ The descent of the British, under General Prevost and Colonel Campbell, upon Georgia.

It would be happy for him, if he had the art himself. He most certainly had art enough, in the beginning, to blow up a flame, and to set the whole continent in agitation.

23 April.

More than a month has passed away since writing the above, and no opportunity has yet offered of conveying you a line ; next to the pain of not receiving, is that of not being able to send a token of remembrance and affection. (You must excuse my not copying, as paper is ten dollars per quire.) Last week a packet arrived from Brest, with despatches for Congress, but no private letters. I was disappointed, but did not complain. You would have written, I know, had you supposed she was coming to Boston. By her we heard of the safe arrival of the *Alliance* in France, which gave me much pleasure. May she have as safe a return to us again. Last week, arrived here the frigate *Warren*, after a successful cruise. She had been out about six weeks, in company with the *Queen of France*, and the *Ranger*, Captain Jones. They fell in with, and captured, a fleet, bound from New York to Georgia, consisting of ship *Jason*, twenty guns, and one hundred and fifty men ; ship *Maria*, sixteen guns, eighty-four men, having on board eighteen hundred barrels of flour ; privateer schooner *Hibernian*, eight guns, and forty-five men ; brigs *Patriot*, *Prince Frederick*, *Bachelor John*, and schooner *Chance* ; all of which are safe arrived, to the universal joy and satisfaction

of every well-wisher of his country. The officers who were captured, acknowledge that this loss will be severely felt by the enemy, and it is hoped that it will give General Lincoln important advantages over him in Georgia.

Respecting domestic affairs, I shall do tolerably, whilst my credit is well supported abroad ; and my demands there shall be as small as possible, considering the state of things here ; but I cannot purchase a bushel of grain under three hard dollars, though the scarcity of that article makes it dearer than other things.

My pen is really so bad that I cannot add any further, than that I am wholly

Yours.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

8 June, 1779.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

Six months have already elapsed since I heard a syllable from you or my dear son, and five, since I have had one single opportunity of conveying a line to you. Letters of various dates have lain months at the Navy Board, and a packet and frigate, both ready to sail at an hour's warning, have been months waiting the orders of Congress. They no doubt have their reasons, or ought to have, for detaining them. I must patiently wait their motions, however pain-

ful it is; and that it is so, your own feelings will testify. Yet I know not but you are less a sufferer than you would be to hear from us, to know our distresses, and yet be unable to relieve them. The universal cry for bread, to a humane heart, is painful beyond description, and the great price demanded and given for it verifies that pathetic passage of sacred writ, "All that a man hath will he give for his life." Yet He who miraculously fed a multitude with five loaves and two fishes, has graciously interposed in our favor, and delivered many of the enemy's supplies into our hands, so that our distresses have been mitigated. I have been able as yet to supply my own family, sparingly, but at a price that would astonish you. Corn is sold at four dollars, hard money, per bushel, which is equal to eighty at the rate of exchange.

Labor is at eight dollars per day, and in three weeks it will be at twelve, 't is probable, or it will be more stable than any thing else. Goods of all kinds are at such a price that I hardly dare mention it. Linens are sold at twenty dollars per yard; the most ordinary sort of calicoes at thirty and forty; broadcloths at forty pounds per yard; West India goods full as high; molasses at twenty dollars per gallon; sugar four dollars per pound; bohea tea at forty dollars; and our own produce in proportion. Butcher's meat at six and eight shillings per pound; board at fifty and sixty dollars per week; rates high. That, I suppose you will rejoice at; so would I, did it remedy the evil. I pay five hundred dollars, and a new

continental rate has just appeared, my proportion of which will be two hundred more. I have come to this determination, to sell no more bills, unless I can procure hard money for them, although I shall be obliged to allow a discount. If I sell for paper, I throw away more than half, so rapid is the depreciation ; nor do I know that it will be received long. I sold a bill to Blodget at five for one, which was looked upon as high at that time. The week after I received it, two emissions were taken out of circulation, and the greater part of what I had, proved to be of that sort ; so that those, to whom I was indebted, are obliged to wait, and before it becomes due, or is exchanged, it will be good for— as much as it will fetch, which will be nothing, if it goes on as it has done for this three months past. I will not tire your patience any longer. I have not drawn any further upon you. I mean to wait the return of the *Alliance*, which with longing eyes I look for. God grant it may bring me comfortable tidings from my dear, dear friend, whose welfare is so essential to my happiness, that it is entwined around my heart, and cannot be impaired or separated from it without rending it asunder.

In contemplation of my situation, I am sometimes thrown into an agony of distress. Distance, dangers, and O ! I cannot name all the fears which sometimes oppress me, and harrow up my soul. Yet must the common lot of man one day take place, whether we dwell in our own native land, or are far distant from it. That we rest under the shadow of the Almighty

is the consolation to which I resort, and find that comfort which the world cannot give. If He sees best to give me back my friend, or to preserve my life to him, it will be so.

Our worthy friend, Dr. Winthrop, is numbered with the great congregation, to the inexpressible loss of Harvard College.

“ Let no weak drop

Be shed for him. The virgin, in her bloom
Cut off, the joyous youth, and darling child,
These are the tombs that claim the tender tear,
And elegiac song. But Winthrop calls
For other notes of gratulation high,
That now he wanders through those endless worlds
He here so well descried, and wondering talks,
And hymns their Author with his glad compeers.”

The testimony he gave with his dying breath, in favor of revealed religion, does honor to his memory, and will endear it to every lover of virtue. I know not who will be found worthy to succeed him.

Congress have not yet made any appointment of you to any other court. There appears a dilatoriness, an indecision, in their proceedings. I have in Mr. Lovell an attentive friend, who kindly informs me of every thing which passes relative to you and your situation, and gives me extracts of your letters both to himself and others. I know you will be unhappy whenever it is not in your power to serve your country, and wish yourself at home, where at least you might serve your family. I cannot say that I think our affairs go very well here. Our currency seems

to be the source of all our evils. We cannot fill up our Continental army by means of it. No bounty will prevail with them. What can be done with it? It will sink in less than a year. The advantage the enemy daily gains over us is owing to this. Most truly did you prophesy, when you said that they would do all the mischief in their power with the forces they had here.

My tenderest regards ever attend you in all places and situations.

Ever, ever yours.

TO JOHN ADAMS.¹

DEAREST OF FRIENDS,

My habitation, how disconsolate it looks! my table, I sit down to it, but cannot swallow my food! O, why was I born with so much sensibility, and why, possessing it, have I so often been called to struggle with it? I wish to see you again. Were I sure you would not be gone, I could not withstand the temptation of coming to town, though my heart would suffer over again the cruel torture of separation.

¹ Mr. Adams had returned from France in August, but was required by Congress again to embark at this time, with powers to negotiate a peace with Great Britain. He took with him, upon this occasion, his two eldest sons.

What a cordial to my dejected spirits were the few lines last night received ! And does your heart forebode that we shall again be happy ? My hopes and fears rise alternately. I cannot resign more than I do, unless life itself were called for. My dear sons, I cannot think of them without a tear. Little do they know the feelings of a mother's heart. May they be good and useful as their father ! Then will they, in some measure, reward the anxiety of a mother. My tenderest love to them. Remember me also to Mr. Thaxter, whose civilities and kindness I shall miss.

God Almighty bless and protect my dearest friend, and in his own time, restore him to the affectionate bosom of

PORTIA.

14 November, 1779.

TO JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

12 January, 1780.

MY DEAR SON,

I HOPE you have had no occasion, either from enemies or the dangers of the sea, to repent your second voyage to France. If I had thought your reluctance arose from proper deliberation, or that you were capable of judging what was most for your own benefit, I should not have urged you to accompany your father and brother when you appeared so averse to the voyage.

You, however, readily submitted to my advice, and, I hope, will never have occasion yourself, nor give me reason, to lament it. Your knowledge of the language must give you greater advantages now than you could possibly have reaped whilst ignorant of it; and as you increase in years, you will find your understanding opening and daily improving.

Some author, that I have met with, compares a judicious traveller to a river, that increases its stream the further it flows from its source; or to certain springs, which, running through rich veins of minerals, improve their qualities as they pass along. It will be expected of you, my son, that, as you are favored with superior advantages under the instructive eye of a tender parent, your improvement should bear some proportion to your advantages. Nothing is wanting with you but attention, diligence, and steady application. Nature has not been deficient.

These are times in which a genius would wish to live. It is not in the still calm of life, or the repose of a pacific station, that great characters are formed. Would Cicero have shone so distinguished an orator if he had not been roused, kindled, and inflamed by the tyranny of Catiline, Verres, and Mark Anthony? The habits of a vigorous mind are formed in contending with difficulties. All history will convince you of this, and that wisdom and penetration are the fruit of experience, not the lessons of retirement and leisure. Great necessities call out great virtues. When a mind is raised and animated by scenes that engage the heart, then those qualities, which would

otherwise lie dormant, wake into life and form the character of the hero and the statesman. War, tyranny, and desolation are the scourges of the Almighty, and ought no doubt to be deprecated. Yet it is your lot, my son, to be an eyewitness of these calamities in your own native land, and, at the same time, to owe your existence among a people who have made a glorious defence of their invaded liberties, and who, aided by a generous and powerful ally, with the blessing of Heaven, will transmit this inheritance to ages yet unborn.

Nor ought it to be one of the least of your incitements towards exerting every power and faculty of your mind, that you have a parent who has taken so large and active a share in this contest, and discharged the trust reposed in him with so much satisfaction as to be honored with the important embassy which at present calls him abroad.

The strict and inviolable regard you have ever paid to truth, gives me pleasing hopes that you will not swerve from her dictates, but add justice, fortitude, and every manly virtue which can adorn a good citizen, do honor to your country, and render your parents supremely happy, particularly your ever affectionate mother,

A. A.

TO JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

20 March, 1780.

MY DEAR SON,

YOUR letter, last evening received from Bilboa, relieved me from much anxiety ; for, having a day or two before received letters from your papa, Mr. Thaxter,¹ and brother, in which packet I found none from you, nor any mention made of you, my mind, ever fruitful in conjectures, was instantly alarmed. I feared you were sick, unable to write, and your papa, unwilling to give me uneasiness, had concealed it from me ; and this apprehension was confirmed by every person's omitting to say how long they should continue in Bilboa.

Your father's letters came to Salem, yours to Newburyport, and soon gave ease to my anxiety, at the same time that it excited gratitude and thankfulness to Heaven, for the preservation you all experienced in the imminent dangers which threatened you. You express in both your letters a degree of thankfulness. I hope it amounts to more than words, and that you will never be insensible to the particular preservation you have experienced in both your voyages. You have seen how inadequate the aid of man would have been, if the winds and the seas had

¹ This gentleman, who was a student at law in the office of Mr. Adams, at the commencement of the troubles, accompanied him in the capacity of private secretary on this mission.

not been under the particular government of that Being, who “stretched out the heavens as a span,” who “holdeth the ocean in the hollow of his hand,” and “rideth upon the wings of the wind.”

If you have a due sense of your preservation, your next consideration will be, for what purpose you are continued in life. It is not to rove from clime to clime, to gratify an idle curiosity ; but every new mercy you receive is a new debt upon you, a new obligation to a diligent discharge of the various relations in which you stand connected ; in the first place, to your great Preserver ; in the next, to society in general ; in particular, to your country, to your parents, and to yourself.

The only sure and permanent foundation of virtue is religion. Let this important truth be engraven upon your heart. And also, that the foundation of religion is the belief of the one only God, and a just sense of his attributes, as a being infinitely wise, just, and good, to whom you owe the highest reverence, gratitude, and adoration ; who superintends and governs all nature, even to clothing the lilies of the field, and hearing the young ravens when they cry ; but more particularly regards man, whom he created after his own image, and breathed into him an immortal spirit, capable of a happiness beyond the grave ; for the attainment of which he is bound to the performance of certain duties, which all tend to the happiness and welfare of society, and are comprised in one short sentence, expressive of universal benevolence, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour

as thyself." This is elegantly defined by Mr. Pope, in his "Essay on Man."

"Remember, man, the universal cause
Acts not by partial, but by general laws,
And makes what happiness we justly call,
Subsist not in the good of one, but all.
There's not a blessing individuals find,
But some way leans and hearkens to the kind."

Thus has the Supreme Being made the good will of man towards his fellow-creatures an evidence of his regard to Him, and for this purpose has constituted him a dependent being and made his happiness to consist in society. Man early discovered this propensity of his nature, and found

"Eden was tasteless till an Eve was there."

Justice, humanity, and benevolence are the duties you owe to society in general. To your country the same duties are incumbent upon you, with the additional obligation of sacrificing ease, pleasure, wealth, and life itself for its defence and security. To your parents you owe love, reverence, and obedience to all just and equitable commands. To yourself,—here, indeed, is a wide field to expatiate upon. To become what you ought to be, and what a fond mother wishes to see you, attend to some precepts and instructions from the pen of one, who can have no motive but your welfare and happiness, and who wishes in this way to supply to you the personal watchfulness and care, which a separation from you deprived you of at a period of life, when habits are

easiest acquired and fixed ; and, though the advice may not be new, yet suffer it to obtain a place in your memory, for occasions may offer, and perhaps some concurring circumstances unite, to give it weight and force.

Suffer me to recommend to you one of the most useful lessons of life, the knowledge and study of yourself. There you run the greatest hazard of being deceived. Self-love and partiality cast a mist before the eyes, and there is no knowledge so hard to be acquired, nor of more benefit when once thoroughly understood. Ungoverned passions have aptly been compared to the boisterous ocean, which is known to produce the most terrible effects. "Passions are the elements of life," but elements which are subject to the control of reason. Whoever will candidly examine themselves, will find some degree of passion, peevishness, or obstinacy in their natural tempers. You will seldom find these disagreeable ingredients all united in one ; but the uncontrolled indulgence of either is sufficient to render the possessor unhappy in himself, and disagreeable to all who are so unhappy as to be witnesses of it, or suffer from its effects.

You, my dear son, are formed with a constitution feelingly alive ; your passions are strong and impetuous ; and, though I have sometimes seen them hurry you into excesses, yet with pleasure I have observed a frankness and generosity accompany your efforts to govern and subdue them. Few persons are so subject to passion, but that they can com-

mand themselves, when they have a motive sufficiently strong; and those who are most apt to transgress will restrain themselves through respect and reverence to superiors, and even, where they wish to recommend themselves, to their equals. The due government of the passions, has been considered in all ages as a most valuable acquisition. Hence an inspired writer observes, "He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." This passion, coöperating with power, and unrestrained by reason, has produced the subversion of cities, the desolation of countries, the massacre of nations, and filled the world with injustice and oppression. Behold your own country, your native land, suffering from the effects of lawless power and malignant passions, and learn betimes, from your own observation and experience, to govern and control yourself. Having once obtained this self-government, you will find a foundation laid for happiness to yourself and usefulness to mankind. "Virtue alone is happiness below;" and consists in cultivating and improving every good inclination, and in checking and subduing every propensity to evil. I have been particular upon the passion of anger, as it is generally the most predominant passion at your age, the soonest excited, and the least pains are taken to subdue it;

— "what composes man, can man destroy."

I do not mean, however, to have you insensible to real injuries. He who will not turn when he is

trodden upon is deficient in point of spirit; yet, if you can preserve good breeding and decency of manners, you will have an advantage over the aggressor, and will maintain a dignity of character, which will always insure you respect, even from the offender.

I will not overburden your mind at this time. I mean to pursue the subject of self-knowledge in some future letter, and give you my sentiments upon your future conduct in life, when I feel disposed to resume my pen.

In the mean time, be assured, no one is more sincerely interested in your happiness, than your ever affectionate mother,

A. A.

Do not expose my letters. I would copy, but hate it.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Sunday Evening, 16 July, 1780.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I HAD just returned to my chamber, and taken up my pen to congratulate you upon the arrival of the fleet of our allies at Newport, when I was called down to receive the most agreeable of presents,—letters

from my dearest friend. One bearing date March 28th, by Mr. Izard, and one of May 3d, taken out of the post-office ; but to what port they arrived first I know not. They could not be those by the fleet, as in these you make mention of letters, which I have not yet received, nor by the *Alliance*, since Mr. Williams sailed twenty-five days after the fleet, and she was then in France. A pity, I think, that she should stay there when here we are *almost destitute*. Our navy has been unfortunate indeed. I am sorry to find, that only a few lines have reached you from me. I have written by way of Spain, Holland, and Sweden, but not one single direct conveyance have I had to France since you left me. I determine to open a communication by way of Gardoqui, and wish you would make use of the same conveyance.

What shall I say of our political affairs? Shall I exclaim at measures now impossible to remedy? No. I will hope *all* from the generous aid of our allies, in concert with our own exertions. I am not suddenly elated or depressed. I know America capable of any thing she undertakes with spirit and vigor. "Brave in distress, serene in conquest, drowsy when at rest," is her true characteristic. Yet I deprecate a failure in our present effort. The efforts are great, and we give, this campaign, more than half our property to defend the other. He who tarries from the field cannot possibly earn sufficient at home to reward him who takes it. Yet, should Heaven bless our endeavours, and crown this year with the blessings of peace, no exertion will be thought too

great, no price of property too dear. My whole soul is absorbed in the idea. The honor of my dearest friend, the welfare and happiness of this wide-extended country, ages yet unborn, depend for their happiness and security upon the able and skilful, the honest and upright, discharge of the important trust committed to him. It would not become me to write the full flow of my heart upon this occasion. My constant petition for him is, that he may so discharge the trust reposed in him as to merit the approving eye of Heaven, and peace, liberty, and safety crown his latest years in his own native land.

The Marchioness,¹ at the Abbé Raynal's, is not the only lady who joins an approving voice to that of her country, though at the expense of her present domestic happiness. It is easier to admire virtue than to practise it; especially the great virtue of self-denial. I find but few sympathizing souls. Why should I look for them? since few have any souls, but of the sensitive kind. That nearest allied to my own they have taken from me, and tell me honor and fame are a compensation.

“Fame, wealth, or honor, — what are ye to love?”

But hushed be my pen. Let me cast my eye upon the letters before me. What is the example? I follow it in silence.

Present my compliments to Mr. Dana.² Tell him

¹ Doubtless the Marchioness Lafayette.

² Francis Dana was appointed by Congress secretary to Mr.

I have called upon his lady, and we enjoyed an afternoon of sweet communion. I find she would not be averse to taking a voyage, should he be continued abroad. She groans most bitterly, and is irreconcilable to his absence. I am a mere philosopher to her. I am *inured*, but not hardened, to the painful portion. Shall I live to see it otherwise ?

Your letters are always valuable to me, but more particularly so when they close with an affectionate assurance of regard, which, though I do not doubt, is never repeated without exciting the tenderest sentiments ; and never omitted without pain to the affectionate bosom of your

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

15 October, 1780.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I CLOSED a long letter to you only two days ago, but as no opportunity is omitted by me, I embrace this, as Colonel Fleury was kind enough to write me on purpose, from Newport, to inform me of it, and to promise a careful attention to it. Yet I feel doubtful of its safety. The enemy seems to be collect-

Adams upon this mission, and accompanied him in his voyage. He was afterwards sent to Russia as Minister ; upon which occasion Mr. Adams's eldest son went with him to St. Petersburg.

ing a prodigious force into these seas, and is bent upon the destruction of our allies. We are not a little anxious for them, and cannot but wonder, that they are not yet reinforced. Graves's fleet, Arbuthnot's, and Rodney's, all here ; with such a superiority, can it be matter of surprise, if M. de Ternay should fall a sacrifice ? My own mind, I own, is full of apprehension ; yet I trust we shall not be delivered over to the vengeance of a nation more wicked and perverse than our own. We daily experience the correcting and the defending arm. The enclosed papers will give you the particulars of an infernal plot, and the providential discovery of it. For, however the belief of a particular Providence may be exploded by the modern wits, and the infidelity of too many of the rising generation deride the idea, yet the virtuous mind will look up and acknowledge the great First Cause, without whose notice not even a sparrow falls to the ground.

I am anxious to hear from you. Your last letter, which I have received, was dated June the 17th. I have written you repeatedly, that my trunk was not put on board the *Alliance* ; that poor vessel was the sport of more than winds and waves. The conduct with regard to her is considered as very extraordinary. She came to Boston, as you have no doubt heard. Landais is suspended. The man must be new made before he can be entitled to command. I hope Captain Sampson arrived safe. He carried the resolve of Congress, which you wanted.

You tell me to send you prices current. I will

aim at it. Corn, is now thirty pounds, rye twenty-seven, per bushel. Flour from a hundred and forty to a hundred and thirty per hundred. Beef, eight dollars per pound ; mutton, nine ; lamb, six, seven, and eight. Butter twelve dollars per pound ; cheese, ten. Sheep's wool thirty dollars per pound ; flax, twenty. West India articles ; — sugar, from a hundred and seventy to two hundred pounds per hundred ; molasses, forty-eight dollars per gallon ; tea, ninety ; coffee, twelve ; cotton wool, thirty per pound. Exchange from seventy to seventy-five for hard money. Bills at fifty. Money scarce ; plenty of goods ; *enormous* taxes. Our State affairs are thus. Hancock will be Governor, by a *very great* majority ; the Senate will have to choose the Lieutenant-Governor. Our constitution is read with great admiration in New York, and pronounced by the Royal Governor the best republican form he ever saw, but with sincere hopes that it might not be accepted. How will it be administered ? is now the important question.

The report of the day is, that three thousand troops are arrived at New York from England.

Adieu ! Most affectionately yours.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

28 January, 1781.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

LAST evening General Lincoln called here, introducing to me a gentleman, by the name of Colonel Laurens, the son, as I suppose, of your much esteemed friend, the late President of Congress ; who informed me, that he expected to sail for France in a few days, and would take despatches from me. Although I closed letters to you, by way of Holland, a few days ago, I would not omit so good an opportunity as the present. 'Tis a long time since the date of your last letters, the 25th of September. I wait with much anxiety, listening to the sound of every gun, but none announce the arrival of the *Fame*, from Holland, which we greatly fear is taken or lost, or the *Mars*, from France. Colonel Laurens is enabled, I suppose, to give you every kind of intelligence respecting the army, which you may wish to learn.

I have the pleasure to inform you, that a repeal of the obnoxious tender act has passed the House and Senate. The Governor, as has been heretofore predicted, when any thing not quite popular is in agitation, has the gout, and is confined to his bed. A false weight and a false balance are an abomination, and in that light this tender act must be viewed by every impartial person. Who, but an idiot, would

believe that forty were equal to seventy-five ? But the repeal gives us reason to hope, that justice and righteousness will again exalt our nation ; that public faith will be restored ; that individuals will lend to the public ; and that the heavy taxes, which now distress all orders, will be lessened.

A late committee, who have been sitting upon ways and means for raising money, tell us, that a tax for two years more, equal to what we have paid in the last, would clear this State of debt. You may judge of the weight of them ; yet our State taxes are but as a grain of mustard seed, when compared with our town taxes. Clinton, I hear, has sent out a proclamation upon Germain's plan, inviting the people to make a separate peace, which will only be a new proof of the ignorance and folly of our enemies, without making a single proselyte. Even the revolted Pennsylvania troops gave up to justice the spies, whom Clinton sent to them, offering them clothing and pay ; letting him know, that it was justice from their State, not favors from their enemies, which they wanted.

It is reported, that Arnold, with a body of troops, is gone to Virginia, where it is hoped he and his Myrmidons will meet their fate. Had Clinton been a generous enemy, or known human nature, he would, like Aurelian, upon a like occasion, have given up the traitor to the hands of justice ; knowing that it was in vain to expect fidelity in a man who had betrayed his own country, which, from his defection, may learn to place a higher value upon in-

tegrity and virtue than upon a savage ferocity, so often mistaken for courage. He who, as an individual, is cruel, unjust, and immoral, will not be likely to possess the virtues necessary in a general or statesman. Yet, in our infant country, infidelity and debauchery are so fashionably prevalent, that less attention is paid to the characters of those who fill important offices, than a love of virtue and zeal for public liberty can warrant; which, we are told by wise legislators of old, are the surest preservatives of public happiness.

You observe in a late letter, that your absence from your native State will deprive you of an opportunity of being a man of importance in it. I hope you are doing your country more extensive service abroad, than you could have done, had you been confined to one State only; and, whilst you continue in the same estimation among your fellow-citizens in which you are now held, you will not fail of being of importance to them at home or abroad.

Heaven preserve the life and health of my dear absent friend, and, in its own time, return him to his country and to the arms of his ever affectionate

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

25 May, 1781.

In this beautiful month, when Nature wears her gayest garb, and animal and vegetable life is diffused on every side ; when the cheerful hand of industry is laying a foundation for a plentiful harvest, who can forbear to rejoice in the season, or refrain from looking "through nature up to nature's God ;"

"To feel the present Deity, and taste
The joy of God, to see a happy world."

While my heart expands, it, sighing, seeks its associate, and joins its first parent in that beautiful description of Milton.

"Sweet is the breath of Morn, her rising sweet,
With charm of earliest birds ; pleasant the sun,
When first on this delightful land he spreads
His orient beams on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,
Glistening with dew ; fragrant the fertile earth
After soft showers ; and sweet the coming on
Of grateful Evening mild ; then silent Night
With this her solemn bird, and this fair moon,
And these the gems of Heaven, her starry train :
But neither breath of morn when she ascends
With charm of earliest birds ; nor rising sun
On this delightful land ; nor herb, fruit, flower,
Glistening with dew ; nor fragrance after showers ;
Nor grateful Evening mild ; nor silent Night
With this her solemn bird, nor walk by moon,
Or glittering starlight, *without thee is sweet.*"

This passage has double charms for me, painted by the hand of truth ; and for the same reason, that a dear friend of mine, after having viewed a profusion of beautiful pictures, pronounced that which represented the parting of Hector and Andromache to be worth them all. The journal in which this is mentioned does not add any reason why it was so ; but Portia felt its full force, and paid a grateful tear to the acknowledgment.

We are anxiously waiting for intelligence from abroad. We shall have in the field a more respectable army, than has appeared there since the commencement of the war ; and all raised for three years or during the war, most of them men who have served before. The towns have exerted themselves upon this occasion with a spirit becoming patriots. We wish for a naval force, superior to what we have yet had, to act in concert with our army. We have been flattered from day to day, yet none has arrived. The enemy exults in the delay, and is improving the time to ravage Carolina and Virginia.

We hardly know what to expect from the United Provinces, because we are not fully informed of their disposition. Britain has struck a blow, by the capture of Eustatia, sufficient to arouse and unite them against her, if there still exists that spirit of liberty, which shone so conspicuous in their ancestors, and which, under much greater difficulties, led their hardy forefathers to reject the tyranny of Philip. I wish your powers may extend to an alliance with

them, and that you may be as successful against the artifices of Britain, as a former ambassador¹ was against those of another nation, when he negotiated a triple alliance in the course of five days, with an address which has ever done honor to his memory. If I was not so nearly connected, I should add, that there is no small similarity in the character of my friend and the gentleman, whose memoirs I have read with great pleasure.

Our State affairs I will write you, if the vessel does not sail till after election. Our friend, Mr. Cranch, goes from here representative, by a unanimous vote. Dr. Tufts, of Weymouth, is chosen senator. Our governor and lieutenant-governor, as at the beginning. Our poor old currency is breathing its last gasp. It received a most fatal wound from a collection of near the whole body's entering here from the southward; having been informed, that it was treated here with more respect, and that it could purchase a solid and durable dress here for seventy-five paper dollars, but half the expense it must be at there, it travelled here with its whole train; and, being much debauched in its manners, communicated the contagion all of a sudden, and is universally rejected. It has given us a great shock.

Your ever affectionate

PORTIA.

¹ Sir William Temple.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

9 December, 1781.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I HEAR the *Alliance* is again going to France, with the Marquis de la Fayette and the Count de Noailles. I will not envy the Marquis the pleasure of annually visiting his family, considering the risk he runs in doing it; besides, he deserves the good wishes of every American, and a large portion of the honors and applause of his own country. He returns with the additional merit of laurels won at Yorktown by the capture of a whole British army. America may boast, that she has accomplished what no power before her ever did, contending with Britain,—captured two of their celebrated generals, and each with an army of thousands of veteran troops to support them. This event, whilst it must fill Britain with despondency, will draw the Union already framed still closer and give us additional allies; and, if properly improved, will render a negotiation easier and more advantageous to America.

But I cannot reflect much upon public affairs, until I have unburdened the load of my own heart. Where shall I begin my list of grievances? Not by accusations, but lamentations. My first is, that I do not hear from you; a few lines only, dated in April and May, have come to hand for fifteen months.

You do not mention receiving any from me except by Captain Casneau, though I wrote by Colonel Laurens, by Captain Brown, by Mr. Storer, Dexter, and many others; to Bilboa by Trask, and several times by way of France. You will refer me to Gillon, I suppose. Gillon has acted a base part, of which, no doubt, you are long ere now apprized. You had great reason to suppose, that he would reach America as soon or sooner than the merchant vessels, and placed much confidence in him by the treasure you permitted to go on board of him. Ah! how great has my anxiety been. What have I not suffered since I heard my dear Charles was on board, and no intelligence to be procured of the vessel for four months after he sailed. Most people concluded, that she was foundered at sea, as she sailed before a violent storm. Only three weeks ago did I hear the contrary. My uncle despatched a messenger, the moment a vessel from Bilboa arrived with the happy tidings, that she was safe at Corunna; that the passengers had all left the ship in consequence of Gillon's conduct, and were arrived at Bilboa. The vessel sailed the day that the passengers arrived at Bilboa, so that no letters came by Captain Lovett; but a Dr. Sands reports, that he saw a child, who they told him was yours, and that he was well. This was a cordial to my dejected spirits. I know not what to wish for. Should he attempt to come at this season upon the coast, it has more horrors than I have fortitude. I am still distressed; I must resign him to the kind, protecting hand of that Being, who

hath hitherto preserved him, and submit to whatever dispensation is allotted me.

What is the matter with Mr. Thaxter? Has he forgotten all his American friends, that, out of four vessels which have arrived, not a line is to be found on board of one of them from him? I could quarrel with the climate, but surely, if it is subject to the ague, there is a fever fit as well as a cold one. Mr. Guild tells me, he was charged with letters, but left them, with his other things, on board the frigate. She gave him the slip and he stepped on board of Captain Brown's ship, and happily arrived safe. From him I have learned many things respecting my dear connexions; but still I long for that free communication, which I see but little prospect of obtaining. Let me again entreat you to write by way of Guardoqui. Bilboa is as safe a conveyance as I know of. Ah, my dear John! where are you? In so remote a part of the globe, that I fear I shall not hear a syllable from you. Pray write me all the intelligence you get from him; send me his letters to you. Do you know I have not had a line from him for a year and a half? Alas! my dear, I am much afflicted with a disorder called the *heartache*, nor can any remedy be found in America. It must be collected from Holland, Petersburg, and Bilboa.

And now, having recited my griefs and complaints, the next in place are those of my neighbours. I have been applied to by the parents of several Braintree youth to write to you in their behalf, requesting your aid and assistance, if it is in

your power to afford it. Captain Cathcart, in the privateer *Essex*, from Salem, went out on a cruise last April in the Channel of England, and was, on the 10th of June, so unfortunate as to be taken and carried into Ireland. The officers were confined there, but the sailors were sent prisoners to Plymouth jail, twelve of whom are from this town, a list of whom I enclose. The friends of these people have received intelligence by way of an officer, who belonged to the *Protector*, and who escaped from the jail, that in August last they were all alive, several of them very destitute of clothing, having taken but a few with them and those for the summer, particularly Ned Savil and Job Field. Their request is, that, if you can, you would render them some assistance; if not by procuring an exchange, that you would get them supplied with necessary clothing. I have told them, that you would do all in your power for them, but what that would be, I could not say. Their friends here are all well, many of them greatly distressed for their children, and in a particular manner the mother of Josiah Bass. I wish you to be very particular in letting me know, by various opportunities and ways after the receipt of this, whether you have been able to do any thing for them, that I may relieve the minds of these distressed parents. The Captain got home about three months ago by escaping to France, but could give no account of his men after they were taken.

Two years, my dearest friend, have passed away since you left your native land. Will you not re-

turn ere the close of another year? I will purchase you a retreat in the woods of Vermont, and retire with you from the vexations, toils, and hazards of public life. Do you not sometimes sigh for such a seclusion? Public peace and domestic happiness;

“an elegant sufficiency, content,
Retirement, rural quiet; friendship, books,
Ease and alternate labor; useful life,
Progressive virtue, and approving Heaven.”

May the time, the happy time soon arrive, when we may realize these blessings, so elegantly described by Thomson; for, though many of your countrymen talk in a different style with regard to their intentions, and express their wishes to see you in a conspicuous point of view in your own State, I feel no ambition for a share of it. I know the voice of fame to be a mere weather-cock, unstable as water and fleeting as a shadow. Yet I have pride; I know I have a large portion of it.

I very fortunately received, by the *Apollo*, by the *Juno*, and by the *Minerva*, the things you sent me, all in good order. They will enable me to do, I hope, without drawing upon you, provided I can part with them; but money is so scarce, and taxes so high, that few purchasers are found. Goods will not double, yet they are better than drawing bills, as these cannot be sold but with a large discount. I could not get more than ninety for a hundred dollars, should I attempt it.

I shall enclose an invoice to the house of Ingra-

ham and Bromfield, and one to De Neufville. There is nothing from Bilboa that can be imported to advantage. Handkerchiefs are sold here at seven dollars and a half per dozen. There are some articles which would be advantageous from Holland, but goods there run high, and the retailing vendues, which are tolerated here, ruin the shopkeepers. The articles put up by the American house were better in quality for the price than those by the house of De Neufville. Small articles have the best profit; gauze, ribbons, feathers, and flowers, to make the ladies gay, have the best advance. There are some articles, which come from India, I should suppose would be lower-priced than many others, — Bengals, nankeens, Persian silk, and bandanna handkerchiefs; but the house of Bromfield know best what articles will suit here.

Believe me, with more affection than words can express, ever, ever, yours.

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

25 October, 1782.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

THE family are all retired to rest; the busy scenes of the day are over; a day which I wished to have devoted in a particular manner to my dearest friend;

but company falling in prevented it, nor could I claim a moment until this silent watch of the night.

Look, (is there a dearer name than *friend* ? Think of it for me,) look to the date of this letter, and tell me, what are the thoughts which arise in your mind ? Do you not recollect, that eighteen years have run their circuit since we pledged our mutual faith to each other, and the hymeneal torch was lighted at the altar of Love ? Yet, yet it burns with unabating fervor. Old Ocean has not quenched it, nor old Time smothered it in this bosom. It cheers me in the lonely hour ; it comforts me even in the gloom which sometimes possesses my mind.

It is, my friend, from the remembrance of the joys I have lost, that the arrow of affliction is pointed. I recollect the untitled man, to whom I gave my heart, and, in the agony of recollection, when time and distance present themselves together, wish he had never been any other. Who shall give me back time ? Who shall compensate to me those years I cannot recall ? How dearly have I paid for a titled husband ? Should I wish you less wise, that I might enjoy more happiness ? I cannot find that in my heart. Yet Providence has wisely placed the real blessings of life within the reach of moderate abilities ; and he who is wiser than his neighbour sees so much more to pity and lament, that I doubt whether the balance of happiness is in his scale.

I feel a disposition to quarrel with a race of beings who have cut me off, in the midst of my days, from the only society I delighted in. " Yet no man liveth

for himself," says an authority I will not dispute. Let me draw satisfaction from this source, and, instead of murmuring and repining at my lot, consider it in a more pleasing view. Let me suppose, that the same gracious Being, who first smiled upon our union and blessed us in each other, endowed my friend with powers and talents for the benefit of mankind, and gave him a willing mind to improve them for the service of his country. You have obtained honor and reputation at home and abroad. O! may not an inglorious peace wither the laurels you have won.

I wrote you by Captain Grinnell. The *Firebrand* is in great haste to return, and I fear will not give me time to say half I wish. I want you to say many more things to me than you do; but you write so wise, so like a minister of state. I know your embarrassments. Thus again I pay for titles. Life takes its complexion from inferior things. It is little attentions and assiduities that sweeten the bitter draught and smooth the rugged road.

I have repeatedly expressed my desire to make a part of your family. But "Will you come and see me?" cannot be taken in that serious light I should choose to consider an invitation from those I love. I do not doubt but that you would be glad to see me, but I know you are apprehensive of dangers and fatigues. I know your situation may be unsettled, and it may be more permanent than I wish it. Only think how the words, "three, four, and five years' absence," sound? They sink into my heart with a

weight I cannot express. Do you look like the miniature you sent? I cannot think so. But you have a better likeness, I am told. Is that designed for me? Gracious Heaven! restore to me the original, and I care not who has the shadow.

We are hoping for the fall of Gibraltar, because we imagine that will facilitate a peace; and who is not weary of the war? The French fleet still remain with us, and the British cruisers insult them. More American vessels have been captured since they have lain here than for a year before; the *General Greene* is taken and carried into Halifax, by which, I suppose, I have lost some small bundles or packages. Beals told me, that you gave him seven small packages, which he delivered Captain Bacon for me. The prisoners have all arrived, except Savil, who is yet in France. I mentioned to you before, that some of them had been with me, and offered to repay the money with which you supplied them. I could only tell them, that I had never received a line from you concerning the matter, and that I chose first to hear from you. I would not receive a farthing, unless I had your express direction, and your handwriting to prove, that what you had done was from your private purse, which I was confident was the case, or you would have been as ready to have relieved others, if you had any public funds for that purpose, as those which belonged to this town. I found a story prevailing, that what you had done was at the public expense. This took its rise either from ignorance or ingratitude; but it fully determin-

ed me to receive your direction. The persons who have been with me are the two Clarks, the two Beales, and Job Field.

Adieu, my dear friend. Ever, ever, yours,

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

13 November, 1782.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I HAVE lived to see the close of the third year of our separation. This is a melancholy anniversary to me, and many tender scenes arise in my mind upon the recollection. I feel unable to sustain even the idea, that it will be half that period ere we meet again. Life is too short to have the dearest of its enjoyments curtailed; the social feelings grow callous by disuse, and lose that pliancy of affection which sweetens the cup of life as we drink it. The rational pleasures of friendship and society, and the still more refined sensations of which delicate minds only are susceptible, like the tender blossom, when the rude northern blasts assail them, shrink within and collect themselves together, deprived of the all-cheering and beamy influence of the sun. The blossom falls and the fruit withers and decays; but here the similitude fails, for, though lost for the

present, the season returns, the tree vegetates anew, and the blossom again puts forth.

But, alas ! with me, those days which are past are gone for ever, and time is hastening on that period when I must fall to rise no more, until mortality shall put on immortality, and we shall meet again, pure and disembodied spirits. Could we live to the age of the antediluvians, we might better support this separation ; but, when threescore years and ten circumscribe the life of man, how painful is the idea, that, of that short space, only a few years of social happiness are our allotted portion.

Perhaps I make you unhappy. No. You will enter with a soothing tenderness into my feelings. I see in your eyes the emotions of your heart, and hear the sigh that is wafted across the Atlantic to the bosom of Portia. But the philosopher and the statesman stifles these emotions, and regains a firmness which arrests my pen in my hand.

25 November.

I received from France by the *Alexander* yours, bearing no date, but, by the contents, written about the same time with those I received by Mr. Guild. Shall I return the compliment, and tell you in a poetical style,

“ Should at my feet the world’s great master fall,
Himself, his world, his throne, I’d scorn them all.”

No. Give me the man I love ; you are neither

of an age or temper to be allured by the splendor of a court, or the smiles of princesses. I never suffered an uneasy sensation on that account. I know I have a right to your whole heart, because my own never knew another lord; and such is my confidence in you, that, if you were not withheld by the strongest of all obligations, those of a moral nature, your honor would not suffer you to abuse my confidence.

But whither am I rambling? We have not any thing in the political way worth noticing. The fleet of our allies still remains with us.

Who is there left that will sacrifice as others have done? Portia, I think, stands alone, alas, in more senses than one. This vessel will convey to you the packets designed for the *Firebrand*. I hope, unimportant as they are, they will not be lost.

Shall I close here, without a word of my voyage? I believe it is best to wait a reply, before I say any thing further. Our friends desire me to remember them to you. Your daughter, your image, your superscription, desires to be affectionately remembered to you. O, how many of the sweet domestic joys do you lose by this separation from your family. I have the satisfaction of seeing my children thus far in life behaving with credit and honor. God grant the pleasing prospect may never meet with an alloy, and return to me the dear partner of my early years, rewarded for his past sacrifices by the consciousness of having been extensively useful, not having lived to himself alone; and may the approving voice of his

country crown his later days in peaceful retirement,
in the affectionate bosom of

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

23 December, 1782.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I HAVE omitted writing by the last opportunity to Holland, because I had but small faith in the designs of the owners or passengers ; and I had just written you so largely, by a vessel bound to France, that I had nothing new to say. There are few occurrences in this northern climate, at this season of the year, to divert or entertain you ; and, in the domestic way, should I draw you the picture of my heart, it would be what I hope you still would love, though it contained nothing new. The early possession you obtained there, and the absolute power you have ever maintained over it, leave not the smallest space unoccupied. I look back to the early days of our acquaintance and friendship, as to the days of love and innocence, and, with an indescribable pleasure, I have seen near a score of years roll over our heads, with an affection heightened and improved by time ; nor have the dreary years of absence in the smallest degree effaced from my mind the image of the dear, untitled man to whom I gave my heart. I cannot

sometimes refrain considering the honors with which he is invested, as badges of my unhappiness. The unbounded confidence I have in your attachment to me and the dear pledges of our affection, has soothed the solitary hour, and rendered your absence more supportable ; for, had I loved you with the same affection, it must have been misery to have doubted. Yet a cruel world too often injures my feelings, by wondering how a person, possessed of domestic attachments, can sacrifice them by absenting himself for years.

“If you had known,” said a person to me the other day, “that Mr. Adams would have remained so long abroad, would you have consented that he should have gone ?” I recollected myself a moment, and then spoke the real dictates of my heart. “If I had known, Sir, that Mr. Adams could have effected what he has done, I would not only have submitted to the absence I have endured, painful as it has been, but I would not have opposed it, even though three years more should be added to the number, (which Heaven avert !) I feel a pleasure in being able to sacrifice my selfish passions to the general good, and in imitating the example, which has taught me to consider myself and family but as the small dust of the balance, when compared with the great community.”

It is now, my dear friend, a long, long time, since I had a line from you. The fate of Gibraltar leads me to fear, that a peace is far distant, and that I shall not see you, — God only knows when. I shall say

little about my former request ; not that my desire is less, but, before this can reach you, 't is probable I may receive your opinion ; if in favor of my coming to you, I shall have no occasion to urge it further ; if against it, I would not embarrass you by again requesting it. I will endeavour to sit down and consider it as the portion allotted me. My dear sons are well. Our friends all desire to be remembered. The fleet of our allies expects to sail daily, but where destined we know not. A great harmony has subsisted between them and the Americans ever since their residence here.

Adieu, my dear friend. Why is it, that I hear so seldom from my dear John ? But one letter have I ever received from him since he arrived in Petersburg. I wrote him by the last opportunity. Ever remember me, as I do you, with all the tenderness, which it is possible for one object to feel for another, which no time can obliterate, no distance alter, but which is always the same in the bosom of

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

28 April, 1783.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

At length an opportunity offers, after a space of near five months, of again writing to you. Not a vessel from any port in this State has sailed since January,

by which I could directly convey you a line. I have written twice by way of Virginia, but fear the letters will never reach you. From you, I have lately received several letters, containing the most pleasing intelligence.

“Peace o’er the world her olive branch extends.”

Hail, “Goddess, heavenly bright,
Profuse of *joy* and pregnant with delight.”

The garb of this favorite of America is woven of an admirable texture, and proves the great skill, wisdom, and abilities of the master workmen. It was not fabricated in the loom of France, nor are the materials English, but they are the product of our own American soil, raised and nurtured, not by the gentle showers of Heaven, but by the hard labor and indefatigable industry and firmness of her sons, and watered by the blood of many of them. May its duration be in proportion to its value, and, like the mantle of the prophet, descend with blessings to generations yet to come. And may you, my dearest friend, return to your much loved solitude, with the pleasing reflection of having contributed to the happiness of millions.

We have not received any account of the signing the definitive treaty, so that no public rejoicings have taken place as yet. The fifth article in the treaty has raised the old spirit against the Tories to such a height that it would be at the risk of their lives, should they venture here. It may subside after a

while, but I question whether any State in the Union will admit them, even for twelve months. What then would have been the consequence, if compensation had been granted them ?

Your Journal has afforded me and your friends much pleasure and amusement. You will learn, perhaps, from Congress; that the Journal you meant for Mr. Jackson, was, by some mistake,¹ enclosed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and consequently came before Congress, with other public papers. The Massachusetts delegates applied for it, but were refused it. Mr. Jackson was kind enough to wait upon me, and show me your letter to him, and the other papers enclosed ; and I communicated the Journal to him. Mr. Higginson writes, that it was moved in Congress by Hamilton, of Virginia, and Wilson of Pennsylvania, to censure their ministers for departing from their duty, in not adhering to their instructions, and for *giving offence* to the Court of France by *distrusting their friendship*. They, however, could not carry their point. It was said, the instruction alluded to was founded upon reciprocity, and that Count de Vergennes had not acted upon that principle. When these gentry found, that it would not be considered in the light in which they wished, they gave out, that, if no more was said upon that subject, the other would drop. This is all I have

¹ It was this mistake which furnished the principal accusation made against Mr. Adams in Alexander Hamilton's celebrated pamphlet, published in 1800, upon the eve of the Presidential election.

been able to collect. My intelligence is very imperfect¹ since Mr. Lovell left Congress. Mr. Gerry, I believe, is determined to go again. I shall then have a friend and correspondent who will keep me informed.

Upon receiving a letter from you, in which you desire me to come to you, should you be long detained abroad, I took the liberty of writing to Dr. Lee,² requesting him to give me the earliest intelligence respecting the acceptance of your resignation. I do not think it will be accepted, by what I have already learnt. If it is not, I shall still feel undetermined what to do. From many of your letters, I was led to suppose you would not return without permission. Yet I do not imagine the bare renewal

¹ This will account for the errors, which are many and striking in this paragraph. No motion of the kind alluded to appears in the Journal of Congress. But by the papers of Mr. Madison, lately published, we find that it was made, and particularly directed against Mr. Adams. It was offered, however, by Mr. Mercer of Virginia, and seconded by Mr. Madison himself, for reasons which are stated by the latter; but it was found not to be acceptable to a large proportion of the members, particularly to the Eastern delegates, and was, therefore, never pressed to a decision. Neither Mr. Hamilton of New York, nor Mr. Wilson of Pennsylvania, appears to have been anxious to adopt it.

Upon this, the most controverted and debatable ground of the history of our Revolution, which has been elaborately occupied of late by Mr. Sparks, in his various contributions to it, the present is not the fitting occasion to add a word of commentary. — See the *Papers of James Madison*, p. 407.

² Arthur Lee, then a member of Congress from Virginia.

of a former commission would induce you to tarry. I shall not run the risk, unless you are appointed Minister at the Court of Great Britain.

Our friends are all well, and desire to be affectionately remembered to you. Where is our son? I hear no more of him than if he was out of the world. You wrote me in yours of December 4th, that he was upon his journey to you, but I have never heard of his arrival. Need I add how earnestly I long for the day when Heaven will again bless us in the society of each other? Whether upon European or American ground, is yet in the book of uncertainty; but, to feel entirely happy and easy, I believe it must be in our own republican cottage, with the simplicity which has ever distinguished it and your ever affectionate

PORTIA.

29 April.

I last evening received yours of February 18th, in which you are explicit with regard to your return. I shall, therefore, (let Congress renew or create what commission they please,) at least wait your further direction, though you should be induced to tarry abroad. I have taken no step as yet with regard to coming out, except writing to Dr. Lee, as mentioned before. Heaven send you safe to your ever affectionate

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 20 June, 1783.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

IF I was certain I should welcome you to your native land in the course of the summer, I should not regret Mr. Smith's going abroad without me. Should it be otherwise, should you still be detained abroad, I must submit, satisfied that you judge best, and that you would not subject me to so heavy a disappointment, or yourself to so severe a mortification as I flatter myself it would be, but for the general good. A European life, would, you say, be the ruin of our children. If so, I should be as loth as you to hazard their imbibing sentiments and opinions, which might make them unhappy in a sphere of life, which 't is probable they must fill, not by indulging in luxuries for which it is more than possible they might contract a taste and inclination, but in studious and laborious pursuits.

You have before this day received a joint commission for forming a commercial treaty with Britain. I am at a loss to determine whether you will consider yourself so bound by it, as to tarry longer abroad. Perhaps there has been no juncture in the public affairs of our country, not even in the hour of our deepest distress, when able statesmen and wise counsellors were more wanted than at the present day. Peace abroad leaves us at leisure to look into our own

domestic affairs. Although, upon an estimate of our national debt, it appears but as the small dust of the balance when compared to the object we have obtained, and the benefits we have secured, yet the restless spirit of man will not be restrained ; and we have reason to fear, that domestic jars and confusion will take place of foreign contentions and devastation. Congress have commuted with the army, by engaging to them five years' pay in lieu of half-pay for life. With security for this, they will disband contented ; but our wise legislators are about disputing the power of Congress to do either, without considering their hands in the mouth of the lion, and that, if the just and necessary food is not supplied, the outrageous animal may become so ferocious as to spread horror and devastation. Another Theseus may arise, who, by his reputation and exploits of valor, his personal character and universal popularity, may destroy our Amphictyonic system, and subjugate our infant republic to monarchical domination.

Our House of Representatives is this year composed of more than a hundred new members, some of whom, no doubt, are good men. Nearly all the able and skilful members, who composed the last House, have lost their seats by voting for the return of Mr. Brattle, notwithstanding the strongest evidence in his favor, and the many proofs which were produced of his friendly conduct towards America. For this crime, our worthy friend Mr. Cranch was dropped by this town. The Senate is a loser this year, by the resignation of some excellent members. We

have in this State an impost of five per cent., and an excise act, whilst the neighbouring States have neither. Foreigners, finding this the case, carry their cargoes to other States. At this the merchant grumbles, the farmer groans with his taxes, and the mechanic for want of employ. Heaven avert, that, like the Greek republics, we should, by civil dissension, weaken our power and crush our rising greatness, that the blood of our citizens should be shed in vain, and the labor and toil of our statesmen be finally baffled through niggardly parsimony, lavish prodigality, or ignorance of our real interests. We want a Solomon in wisdom, to guide and conduct this great people at this critical era, when the counsels which are taken and the measures which are pursued will mark our future character, either with honor and fame, or disgrace and infamy. In adversity, we have conducted with prudence and magnanimity. Heaven forbid that we should grow giddy with prosperity; or the height, to which we have soared, render a fall conspicuously fatal.

Thus far I had written when your welcome favor of March 28th reached me. I was not disappointed in finding you uncertain with regard to the time of your return. Should the appointment, which I fear and you have hinted at, take place, it would indeed be a dull day to me. I have not a wish to join in a scene of life so different from that, in which I have been educated, and in which my early, and, I must suppose, happier days, have been spent. Curiosity satisfied, and I shall sigh for tranquil scenes,

"And wish that Heaven had left me still
The whispering zephyr and the purling rill."

Well-ordered home is my chief delight, and the affectionate, domestic wife, with the relative duties which accompany that character, my highest ambition. It was the disinterested wish of sacrificing my personal feelings to the public utility, which first led me to think of unprotectedly hazarding a voyage. I say unprotectedly, for so I consider every lady, who is not accompanied by her husband. This objection could only be surmounted by the earnest wish I had to soften those toils which were not to be dispensed with; and, if the public welfare required your labors and exertions abroad, I flattered myself that, if I could be with you, it might be in my power to contribute to your happiness and pleasure. But the day is now arrived, when, with honor and well-earned fame, you may return to your native land; when I cannot any longer consider it as my duty to submit to a further separation; and when it appears necessary, that those abilities, which have crowned you with laurels abroad, shall be exerted at home for the public safety.

I do not wish you to accept an embassy to England, should you be appointed. This little cottage has more heart-felt satisfaction for you than the most brilliant court can afford.

I will bid you good night. Yours,

PORTIA.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

19 November, 1783.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

YOUR favor, dated at Amsterdam in July, was last evening handed me, and this evening your letter of the 10th of September, by Colonel Ogden, reached me. I had for some time supposed that the delay of public business would retard your return; and, knowing that the definitive treaty was not completed until September, and that the commercial treaty was still to form, I had little reason to expect you, unless your state of health required an immediate resignation of all public business. Your letter, therefore, which informs me of your determination to pass another winter abroad, is by no means unexpected. That we must pass it with a vast ocean between us is a reflection no ways pleasurable, yet this must be the case. I had much to do to persuade myself to venture a summer passage, but a winter one I never could think of encountering. I am too much of a coward. It is now the middle of November. It would be December or January, before I could possibly adjust all my affairs; and I know of no person with whom I am acquainted, except Mr. Jackson of Newburyport, who is now going abroad. Mr. Temple and family sail this month. Besides, there is a stronger objection with me than even a winter's voyage. Congress have not appointed any person

yet to the Court of Britain. There are many who wish for that place. Many who have a more splendid title, and many more thousands, to claim it with. I know Mr. Jay has written pressingly to Congress in your favor, and absolutely declined it himself; but whether you will finally be the person is among the uncertain events. One thing, however, is certain; that I do not wish it. I should have liked very well to have gone to France and resided there a year; but to think of going to England in a public character, and engaging, at my time of life, in scenes quite new, attended with dissipation, parade, and nonsense, — I am sure I should make an awkward figure. The retired domestic circle, “the feast of reason and the flow of soul,” are my ideas of happiness, and my most ardent wish is to have you return and become master of the feast. My health is infirm. I am still subject to a severe nervous pain in my head, and fatigue of any kind will produce it. Neither of us appears to be built for duration. Would to Heaven, the few remaining days allotted us might be enjoyed together. It has been my misfortune, that I could not attend to your health, watch for your repose, alleviate your hours of anxiety, and make you a home wherever you resided. More, says a skilful doctor, depends upon the nurse than the physician. My determination is to tarry at home this winter; and, if I cannot prevail upon you to return to me in the spring, you well know that I may be drawn to you, provided there is any stability in Congress. One strong tie, which held me here, is dissolved. My

dear parent¹ used to say, "You must never go, child, whilst I live." It is far from being my inclination.

Mr. Thaxter will be able to give me, when he arrives, the best intelligence upon the subject. I wrote largely to you last week. I hope this letter will go by a French brig.

Adieu, and believe me, whether present or absent,
Most affectionately yours.

TO JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

Braintree, 20 November, 1783.

THIS evening, as I was sitting with only your sister by my side, who was scribbling to some of her correspondents, my neighbour, Field, entered with, "I have a letter for you, Madam." My imagination was wandering to Paris, ruminating upon the long, long absence of my dear son and his parent, so that I was rather inattentive to what he said, until he repeated, "I have letters for you from abroad." The word "abroad," roused my attention, and I eagerly seized the letters, the handwriting and seal of which gave me hopes, that I was once more about to hear from my young wanderer; nor was I disappointed.

After two years' silence, and a journey of which I can scarcely form an idea, to find you safely re-

¹ The death of the Rev. Mr. Smith, the father of Mrs. Adams, took place not long before the date of this letter.

turned to your parent, to hear of your health and to see your improvements ! You cannot know, should I describe to you, the feelings of a parent. Through your father, I sometimes heard from you, but one letter only ever reached me after you arrived in Russia. Your excuses, however, have weight and are accepted ; but you must give them further energy by a ready attention to your pen in future. Four years have already passed away since you left your native land and this rural cottage ; humble indeed when compared to the palaces you have visited, and the pomp you have been witness to ; but I dare say, you have not been so inattentive an observer as to suppose, that sweet peace and contentment cannot inhabit the lowly roof and bless the tranquil inhabitants, equally guarded and protected in person and property in this happy country as those who reside in the most elegant and costly dwellings. If you live to return, I can form to myself an idea of the pleasure you will take in treading over the ground and visiting every place your early years were accustomed wantonly to gambol in ; even the rocky common and lowly whortleberry bush will not be without their beauties.

My anxieties have been and still are great, lest the numerous temptations and snares of vice should vitiate your early habits of virtue, and destroy those principles, which you are now capable of reasoning upon, and discerning the beauty and utility of, as the only rational source of happiness here, or foundation of felicity hereafter. Placed as we are in a transi-

tory scene of probation, drawing nigher and still nigher day after day to that important crisis which must introduce us into a new system of things, it ought certainly to be our principal concern to become qualified for our expected dignity.

What is it, that affectionate parents require of their children, for all their care, anxiety, and toil on their account? Only that they would be wise and virtuous, benevolent and kind.

Ever keep in mind, my son, that your parents are your disinterested friends, and that if, at any time, their advice militates with your own opinion or the advice of others, you ought always to be diffident of your own judgment; because you may rest assured, that their opinion is founded on experience and long observation, and that they would not direct you but to promote your happiness. Be thankful to a kind Providence, who has hitherto preserved the lives of your parents, the natural guardians of your youthful years. With gratitude I look up to Heaven, blessing the hand which continued to me my dear and honored parents until I was settled in life; and, though now I regret the loss of them, and daily feel the want of their advice and assistance, I cannot suffer as I should have done, if I had been early deprived of them.

You will doubtless have heard of the death of your worthy grandpapa before this reaches you. He left you a legacy more valuable than gold or silver; he left you his blessing and his prayers that you might return to your country and friends, improved

in knowledge and matured in virtue ; that you might become a useful citizen, a guardian of the laws, liberty, and religion of your country, as your father (he was pleased to say) had already been. Lay this bequest up in your memory, and practise upon it ; believe me, you will find it a treasure that neither moth nor rust can devour.

I received letters from your father last evening, dated in Paris the 10th of September, informing me of the necessity of his continuance abroad this winter. The season is so far advanced that I readily sacrifice the desire of seeing him to his safety ; a voyage upon this coast at this season is fraught with dangers. He has made me a request, that I dare not comply with at present. No husband, no son, to accompany me upon the boisterous ocean, to animate my courage and dispel my fears, I dare not engage with so formidable a combatant. If I should find your father fixed in the spring, and determined to continue abroad a year or two longer, the earnest desire I have to meet him and my dear son might overcome the reluctance I feel at the idea of engaging in a new scene, and the love I have for domestic attachments and the still calm of life. But it would be more agreeable to me to enjoy all my friends together in my own native land ; from those who have visited foreign climes I could listen with pleasure to the narrative of their adventures, and derive satisfaction from the learned detail, content, myself, that

“ The little learning I have gained,
Is all from simple nature drained.”

I have a desire that you might finish your education at our University, and I see no chance for it unless you return in the course of the year. Your cousin, W. Cranch, expects to enter next July. He would be happy to have you his associate. I hope your father will indulge you with a visit to England this winter. It is a country I should be fond of your seeing. Christianity, which teaches us to forgive our enemies, prevents me from enjoining upon you a similar vow to that which Hamilcar obtained from his son Hannibal, but I know not how to think of loving those haughty islanders.

Your friends send you their affectionate regards; and I enjoin it upon you to write often to your ever affectionate mother,

A. ADAMS.

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Braintree, 18 December, 1783.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I RETURNED last evening from Boston, where I went at the kind invitation of my uncle and aunt, to celebrate our annual festival. Dr. Cooper being dangerously sick, I went to hear Mr. Clark, who is settled with Dr. Chauncy. This gentleman gave us an animated, elegant, and sensible discourse, from Isaiah, 55th chapter, and 12th verse. "For ye

shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace ; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

Whilst he ascribed glory and praise unto the Most High, he considered the worthy, disinterested, and undaunted patriots as the instruments in the hand of Providence for accomplishing what was marvellous in our eyes. He recapitulated the dangers they had passed through, and the hazards they had run ; the firmness which had, in a particular manner, distinguished some characters, not only early to engage in so dangerous a contest, but, in spite of our gloomy prospects, to persevere even unto the end, until they had obtained a peace, safe and honorable, large as our desires, and much beyond our expectations.

How did my heart dilate with pleasure, when, as each event was particularized, I could trace my friend as a principal in them ; could say it was he who was one of the first in joining the band of patriots, who formed our first national council ; it was he, who, though happy in his domestic attachments, left his wife, his children, then but infants, even surrounded with the horrors of war, terrified and distressed, the week before the memorable 19th of April, — left them to the protection of that Providence which has never forsaken them, and joined himself undismayed to that respectable body, of which he was a member. Trace his conduct through every period, you will find him the same undaunted character, encountering the dangers of the ocean,

risking captivity and a dungeon ; contending with wickedness in high places ; jeoparding his life, endangered by the intrigues, revenge, and malice of a potent, though defeated nation. These are not the mere eulogiums of conjugal affection, but certain facts and solid truths. My anxieties, my distresses, at every period, bear witness to them ; though now, by a series of prosperous events, the recollection is more sweet than painful.

Whilst I was in town, Mr. Dana arrived very unexpectedly ; for I had not received your letters by Mr. Thaxter. My uncle fortunately discovered him as he came up State Street, and instantly engaged him to dine with him, acquainting him that I was in town and at his house. The news soon reached my ears ; “ Mr. Dana arrived,” — “ Mr. Dana arrived,” — from every person you saw ; but how was I affected ? The tears involuntarily flowed from my eyes. Though God is my witness, I envied not the felicity of others, yet my heart swelled with grief ; and the idea that I, I only, was left alone, recalled all the tender scenes of separation, and overcame all my fortitude. I retired, and reasoned myself into composure sufficient to see him without a childish emotion.

But, O ! my dearest friend, what shall I say to you in reply to your pressing invitation. I have already written to you in answer to your letters, which were dated September 10th, and reached me a month before those by Mr. Thaxter. I related to you all my fears respecting a winter's voyage. My

friends are all against it, and Mr. Gerry, as you will see by the copy of his letter enclosed, has given his opinion upon well grounded reasons. If I should leave my affairs in the hands of my friends, there would be much to think of and much to do, to place them in that method and order I would wish to leave them in. Theory and practice are two very different things, and the object is magnified as I approach nearer to it. I think if you were abroad in a private character, and necessitated to continue there, I should not hesitate so much at coming to you ; but a mere American as I am, unacquainted with the etiquette of courts, taught to say the thing I mean, and to wear my heart in my countenance, I am sure I should make an awkward figure ; and then it would mortify my pride, if I should be thought to disgrace you. Yet, strip royalty of its pomp and power, and what are its votaries more than their fellow worms ?

I have so little of the ape about me, that I have refused every public invitation to figure in the gay world, and sequestered myself in this humble cottage, content with rural life and my domestic employment, in the midst of which I have sometimes smiled upon recollecting that I had the honor of being allied to an ambassador.

Adieu.

TO JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

Braintree, 26 December, 1783.

MY DEAR SON,

YOUR letters by Mr. Thaxter, I received, and was not a little pleased with them. If you do not write with the precision of a Robertson, nor the elegance of a Voltaire, it is evident you have profited by the perusal of them. The account of your northern journey, and your observation upon the Russian government, would do credit to an older pen.

The early age at which you went abroad gave you not an opportunity of becoming acquainted with your own country. Yet the revolution, in which we were engaged, held it up in so striking and important a light, that you could not avoid being in some measure irradiated with the view. The characters with which you were connected, and the conversation you continually heard, must have impressed your mind with a sense of the laws, the liberties, and the glorious privileges, which distinguish the free, sovereign, independent States of America.

Compare them with the vassalage of the Russian government you have described, and say, were this highly favored land barren as the mountains of Switzerland, and covered ten months in the year with snow, would she not have the advantage even of Italy, with her orange groves, her breathing statues, and her melting strains of music? or of

Spain, with her treasures from Mexico and Peru? not one of which can boast that first of blessings, the glory of human nature, the inestimable privilege of sitting down under their vines and fig-trees, enjoying in peace and security whatever Heaven has lent them, having none to make them afraid.

Let your observations and comparisons produce in your mind an abhorrence of domination and power, the parent of slavery, ignorance, and barbarism; which places man upon a level with his fellow tenants of the woods;

"A day, an hour, of virtuous liberty
Is worth a whole eternity of bondage."

You have seen power in its various forms, — a benign deity, when exercised in the suppression of fraud, injustice, and tyranny, but a demon, when united with unbounded ambition, — a wide-wasting fury, who has destroyed her thousands. Not an age of the world but has produced characters, to which whole human hecatombs have been sacrificed.

What is the history of mighty kingdoms and nations; but a detail of the ravages and cruelties of the powerful over the weak? Yet it is instructive to trace the various causes, which produced the strength of one nation, and the decline and weakness of another; to learn by what arts one man has been able to subjugate millions of his fellow creatures, the motives which have put him upon action, and the causes of his success; — sometimes driven by

ambition and a lust of power ; at other times, swallowed up by religious enthusiasm, blind bigotry, and ignorant zeal ; sometimes enervated with luxury and debauched by pleasure, until the most powerful nations have become a prey and been subdued by these Sirens, when neither the number of their enemies, nor the prowess of their arms, could conquer them. History informs us that the Assyrian empire sunk under the arms of Cyrus, with his poor but hardy Persians. The extensive and opulent empire of Persia fell an easy prey to Alexander and a handful of Macedonians ; and the Macedonian empire, when enervated by the luxury of Asia, was compelled to receive the yoke of the victorious Romans. Yet even this mistress of the world, as she is proudly styled, in her turn defaced her glory, tarnished her victories, and became a prey to luxury, ambition, faction, pride, revenge, and avarice, so that Jugurtha, after having purchased an acquittance for the blackest of crimes, breaks out into an exclamation, " O city, ready for sale, if a buyer rich enough can be found ! "

The history of your own country and the late revolution are striking and recent instances of the mighty things achieved by a brave, enlightened, and hardy people, determined to be free ; the very yeomanry of which, in many instances, have shown themselves superior to corruption, as Britain well knows, on more occasions than the loss of her André. Glory, my son, in a country which has given birth to characters, both in the civil and mili-

tary departments, which may vie with the wisdom and valor of antiquity. As an immediate descendant of one of those characters, may you be led to an imitation of that disinterested patriotism and that noble love of your country, which will teach you to despise wealth, titles, pomp, and equipage, as mere external advantages, which cannot add to the internal excellence of your mind, or compensate for the want of integrity and virtue.

May your mind be thoroughly impressed with the absolute necessity of universal virtue and goodness, as the only sure road to happiness, and may you walk therein with undeviating steps, — is the sincere and most affectionate wish of

Your mother,

A. ADAMS.

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